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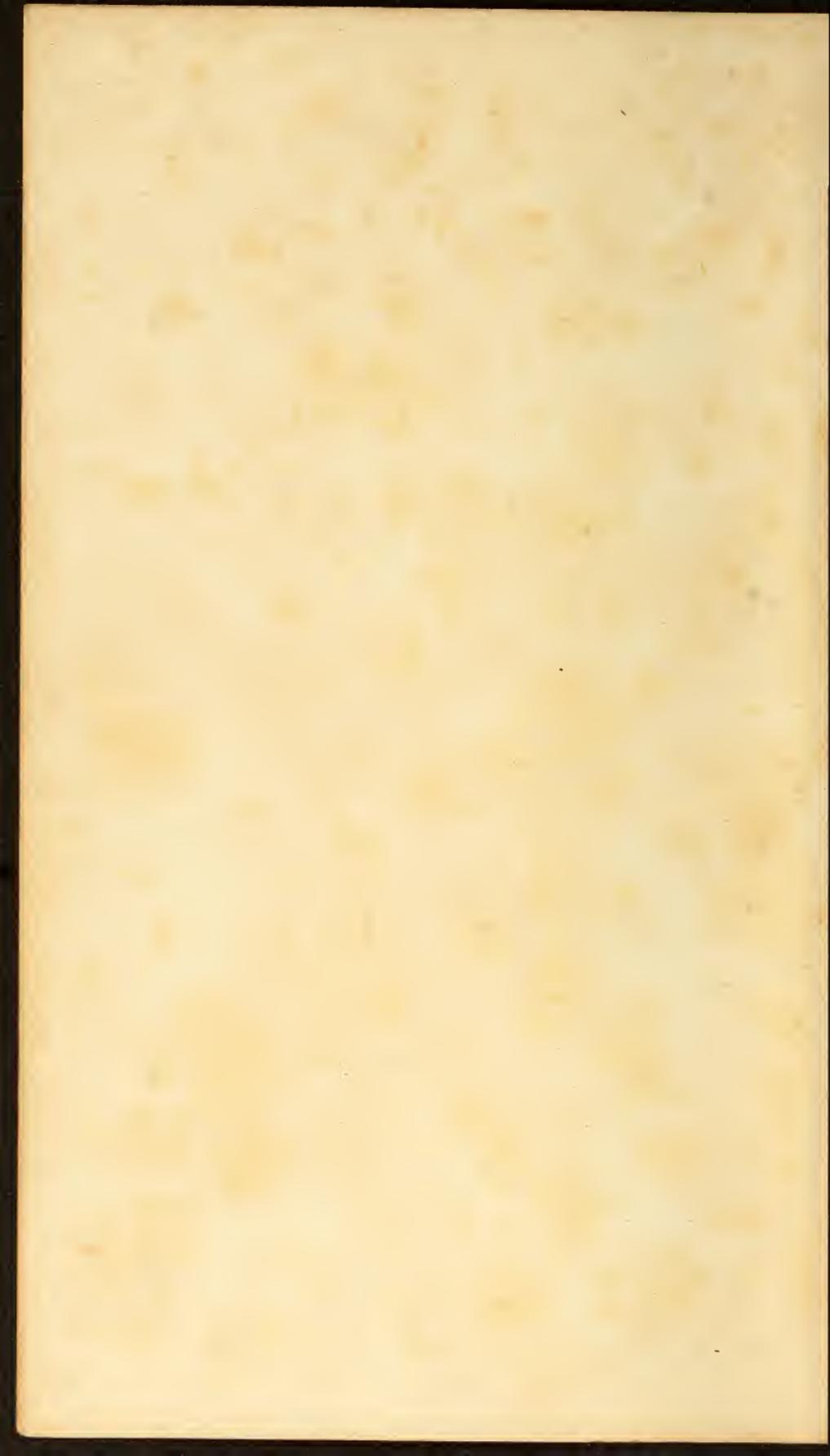
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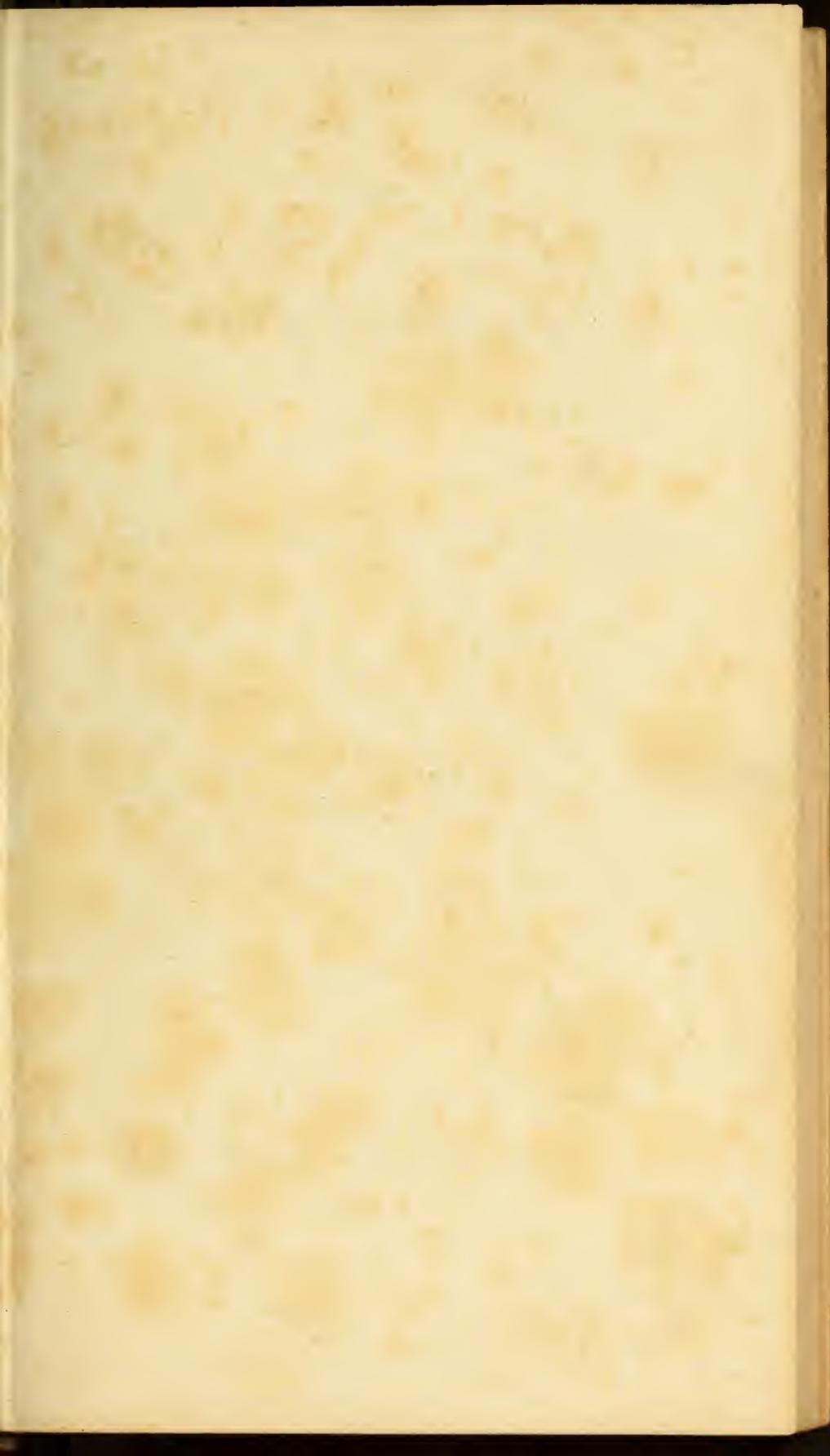


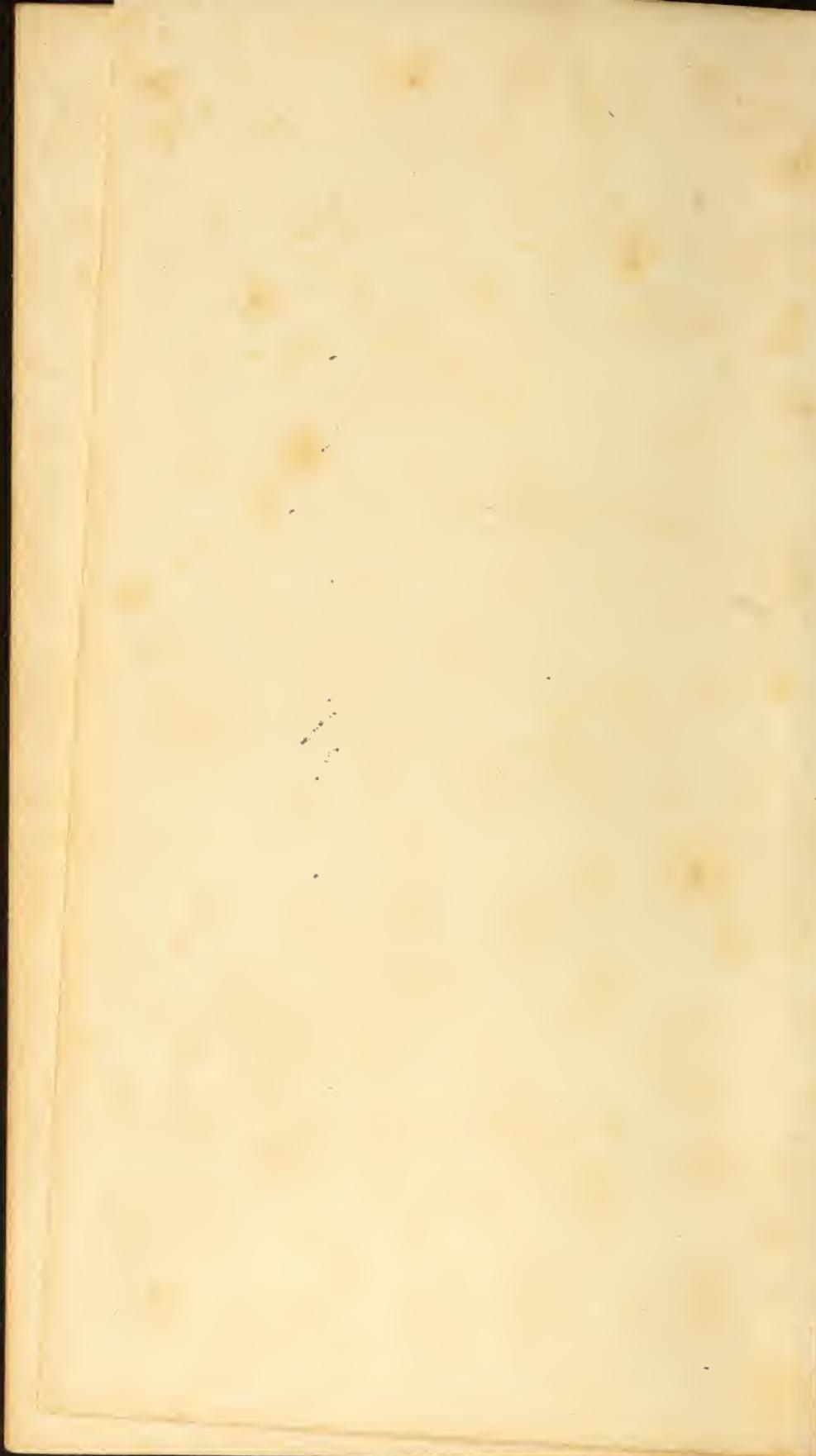












THE
GOSPEL PROMOTIVE
OF
TRUE HAPPINESS.

BY THE
REV. HUGH WHITE, A. M.,

CURATE OF ST. MARY'S PARISH, AND AUTHOR OF "MEDITATIONS ON
PRAYER," "THE BELIEVER," &c. &c.

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P R E F A C E.

IT may be desirable, to prevent mistake or disappointment, to state briefly the design of the following work.

I have been, in some measure, led to the subject I have chosen, and the light in which I have represented it, by what I have witnessed, since last I appeared before the public, of the power of the Gospel, understood and embraced as I have described. I have seen its power gloriously exhibited in enabling a sufferer of years to endure intense and protracted agony with a patience, I should say, a cheerfulness of resignation, that was never ruffled with a passing murmur of discontent; and to enjoy with uninterrupted thankfulness of peace that was undarkened by a passing cloud of doubt or fear—an humble holy peace—resting exclusively on the merits of that Redeemer in whom she trusted with undivided dependence; and stamped by the Holy Spirit with the authenticating impress of His seal—“the image and superscription of God”—traced, with beautiful clearness, in every feature of her character, and every action of her life—a peace which sorrow served only to deepen, and death itself had no power to dis-

turb; for beside the dying bed a Voice was heard—a Voice that never speaks in vain—whispering—“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee!”—and, listening to the comforting assurances of that well-known Voice, and leaning on the almighty arm of Him whose love it revealed, she walked with calm composure through the dark valley of the shadow of death—exclaiming, in the meek confidence of unconquerable faith—“I will fear no evil, for *Thou* art with me !”

And I have also seen the power of the Gospel to impart such deep serenity of soul—such unfailing cheerfulness—such holy joy, to one arrested by the hand of disease in the bright morning of youth, as diffused through her sick chamber an atmosphere of sunshine, so unclouded that Christian friends delighted to come there, to be refreshed by witnessing the Saviour’s faithfulness and tenderness to one of His flock; and the peculiar loveliness of the Christian character, when the heart, in all the freshness of its young affections, is given to God—displayed in the sweet smile which told that the peace of God dwelt within—the gentle voice which delighted to speak of a Saviour’s love, and on whose lips the law of kindness continually dwelt—“the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price”—her delight in the Sabbath and the Scriptures—the deep devotedness of her love to Him who died for us, which enabled her to rejoice in the prospect of death, not from an *impatient* desire to escape from suffering, but from a *holy* de-

sire to “depart and be with Christ”—an unwavering faith that trusted triumphantly in the Redeemer’s righteousness, combined with an unaffected humility that entirely renounced all reliance on her own—and an uncomplaining submission, sweetened by a spirit of thankful contentment, which, in the most affecting language, spoke the inmost feelings of her heart under all her sufferings—“Father! not my will, but Thine be done!”

I have seen these unanswerable proofs of the truth of that touching testimony of Cowper’s, to the consolatory and gladdening influence of the Gospel—that, whatever be the sorrows of the Christian,

“The soul, reposing on assured relief,
Feels herself happy amidst all her grief,
Forgets her labour as she toils along,
Weeps tears of joy, and bursts into a song!”

And having witnessed such triumphant displays of the power of the Gospel, I felt that, debarred, as I am, by my state of health, from the privilege I once enjoyed, of “preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ,” I could not better employ the leisure time which seclusion from the active duties of the ministry afforded me, than in endeavouring to recommend, to my fellow-travellers through the vale of tears, that Gospel whose blessed influences I had thus witnessed, that it might prove to them, also, a ministering spirit of consolation, peace, and joy, in the season of sorrow, in the chamber of sickness, and on the bed of death!

But there is another aspect of the Gospel, which

I have been desirous to exhibit; more especially for the sake of those (in whose happiness I feel deeply interested) who are entering, with all the ardent feelings and high-raised hopes of youth, on the journey of life.

I wish to prove to *them*, that there is not a source of earthly enjoyment, which, even as rational beings, they could consistently desire, that the Gospel forbids;—yea, more than this—not merely that it does not frown upon, but even explicitly sanctions—ay, and by sanctifying, exalts, and additionally sweetens them all! *This* aspect of the Gospel I cannot, perhaps, better illustrate, than by alluding to a circumstance which occurred during my visit to England last year.

I was spending a morning with a devoted servant of God, in the immediate neighbourhood of Keswick. While gazing on the exquisite beauties of the surrounding scenery, encircling that loveliest of the English lakes, a splendid burst of sunshine suddenly broke over the landscape, and lit up all its beauties with surpassing glory! It seemed as if a smile of joy was kindled on creation's cheek by the presence of her God. As I was looking on the scene with intense admiration and delight, the domestics of my Christian host entered the room to assemble for family worship. He immediately sat down to a fine-toned organ; and, while sweet strains of sacred melody rose upon the ear, many voices were blended together in a sublime song of thanksgiving and praise, to the Author of all the beauties that sur-

rounded us—the God of creation, providence, and grace. Now such (I could not but think) is the influence of the Gospel on every purer pleasure that this world supplies. By pouring on them the sunshine of a Saviour's smile, it brightens with celestial splendour every fair scene of earthly enjoyment—and mingles with that enjoyment feelings of adoration, and songs of praise! Thus it heightens while it hallows all earthly happiness—and by purifying makes more precious every sweet source of earthly bliss.

I have, therefore, endeavoured, in this volume, to prove that the search after happiness—that universal search which keeps so many thousands of the children of men in constant restlessness, chasing vain shadows, and disquieting themselves in vain, and which with such multitudes ends in disappointment and everlasting despair—will be successfully pursued only by the individual who has experienced the feelings, and is acting on the resolution, embodied in the pious Doddridge's beautiful paraphrase of his family motto—

“Dum vivimus vivamus.”

“Live while you live, the epicure would say,
And seize the pleasures of the present day!
Live while you live, the sacred preacher cries,
And give to God each moment as it flies!
Lord, in my views let both united be—
I live in pleasure, when I live to Thee!”

Should this volume be honoured as the instrument of inducing a single inquirer who has hitherto been

unsuccessful in his search, to try the only path which conducts to true happiness in this world, or the eternal one beyond the grave, the path that is brightened by a Saviour's smile, and bounded by the vista-view of heaven—I will, indeed, most thankfully rejoice at having been permitted to glorify God, by the addition of even this mite to the sum of human happiness; while giving undividedly the praise to that blessed Spirit, who can alone, by His almighty power, persuade any of Adam's fallen race to lay down, at the foot of the cross, the arms of his rebellion against God; and, with a Saviour's love enthroned in his heart, and the light of His countenance lifted up on his soul—reposing with confidence on His finished work, and rejoicing in hope of “His glorious appearing,” to seek for happiness in the exercises and enjoyments, the pursuits and prospects, of that “godliness which has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.”

HUGH WHITE.

Laurel Hill, 3d February, 1843.

THE GOSPEL

PROMOTIVE OF TRUE HAPPINESS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

AMONG the erroneous impressions, which are so fatally prevalent in the world, on those subjects that are most intimately connected with our true welfare, both for time and for eternity, there is not one, perhaps, which more unequivocally proclaims that man's understanding has been darkened by the fall, or which exercises a more injurious influence on human happiness, than the belief that the religion of the Gospel is unfriendly to present enjoyment; that it requires the sacrifice of every thing which can conduce to render our journey through life a pleasant pilgrimage; and that its distinguishing characteristics are a clouded countenance, a gloomy spirit, and a heavy heart. In order to expose the absurdity, as well as impiety, of this belief, it might be deemed sufficient to appeal to reason, (however fallen from its primeval dignity, and perverted by those depraved passions, by which sin obscures its vision and biases its judgment,) and to abide by its verdict or the decision of the question, whether it is, *a*

priori, a reasonable anticipation, that the service of that Being who is love, essential love, and the fountain of all true felicity, should be a gloomy service—that the consecration of our lives to Him whose loving-kindness is better than life itself, should be calculated to cloud the spirit with melancholy, and the countenance with sadness—and that a well-grounded hope of everlasting happiness in heaven should tend to deprive us of heartfelt happiness during our sojourn on earth! Surely such sentiments are so self-evidently absurd, that to state them is to confute them. And it might appear a work of supererogation—indeed a very waste of words—to use any lengthened argument to prove their impious fallacy, were it not that the practical influence of this erroneous impression (however manifestly it may outrage the plainest dictates of reason, as well as revelation) is so extensively, and, as far as man's real welfare is concerned, so destructively prevalent.

There is, however, one class of individuals, for whom it is impossible not to feel the deepest, the liveliest interest, and to whom this erroneous opinion, as to the influence of religion on present happiness, is peculiarly prejudicial, as it tends so directly and powerfully to dissuade them from entering on the *only* career in which true and satisfying happiness can be found—I mean those who are commencing the journey of life, at that most interesting and critical period when, in all the enthusiasm of youthful feeling, the desire for enjoyment beats high in the human breast—when the passions are strong, the imagination ardent, and the thirst for pleasure so intense, that whatever promises to delight the heart, or to gladden the senses, is but too extravagantly prized, and too eagerly pursued. Oh! of what infinite importance is it to their temporal and eternal welfare, that religion should not appear to

them invested with a repulsive aspect, but arrayed in all her native loveliness, with that heavenly smile irradiating her countenance, which irresistibly carries to the heart the conviction, that "all her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace!"

For the sake, then, more especially of the young, I would desire to endeavour to expose the utter falsehood of this libel against the religion of the Gospel, which Satan, in his malignant hatred of the human race, so peculiarly delights to persuade his blinded victims to believe. I would desire to exhibit the service of "God our Saviour" in its true, its scriptural character, as the source of the purest, sweetest happiness that can be enjoyed on earth, as well as the only guide to eternal happiness in heaven. I would fain persuade those, who, in life's morning prime, are sitting out, buoyant with hope, in search of enjoyment, not to rest satisfied in this matter with the opinion of the world, but to make the trial for themselves, that so, by their own experience, they may ascertain, whether the smile of God will indeed shed a gloom over their pathway through life, and whether the hope of heaven will cloud all the happiness of earth.

In proof of the position I am desirous to establish, I shall endeavour to demonstrate, that true religion is promotive of true happiness. I. Because true religion supplies the *only* object that can entirely fill and satisfy the boundless affections of the human heart.

It requires but a slight acquaintance with the constitution of our nature, and the phenomena that on every side present themselves to our notice, in connexion with the sources of the happiness of our fellow-creatures, to be impressed with the conviction, that the affections exercise the most important

influence on the happiness of mankind. Nor can it be overlooked or controverted, that the misplacing of those affections, the idolatrous lavishing of them, in all their strength and sweetness, on created objects, (however deserving of them, or entitled to them, in a subordinate degree,) has been, ever since the fall, one of the most fruitful sources of that sorrow which has deluged our world, and rendered its history but too like the Prophet's roll, "written within and without, full of lamentation, and mourning, and wo."

In truth, to centre our supreme affections on any creature, even though the object of our idolatrous attachment were possessed of every exalted and engaging attribute of character, and entitled, by the claims of the closest relationship, to the fondest love which a creature has a right to demand, is to run counter to God's design in bestowing those affections. It is to erect an idol in the temple,—yea, on the very altar of the living God! It is to place a usurper on Jehovah's throne! It is to abuse one of His most precious gifts into a means of offering to the gracious Giver one of the most provoking affronts by which His majesty can be insulted, His name dishonoured, and His loving-kindness despised. And can *this* be supposed to be the path that will conduct the soul to true happiness? Can real, can satisfying felicity be consistently hoped for in such an insulting defiance of the divine majesty,—in such an ungrateful contempt of the divine love?

God created man for Himself, to find in his love, in conformity of His character, congeniality with His will, communion with His Spirit, and devotedness to His service, the only satisfying happiness of which his nature is susceptible. God is therefore, Himself, the only object that is worthy of the supreme affections of the human heart, or is capable

of filling their vast capacities with a fulness of bliss commensurate with their infinite desires! In truth, there is in the heart of man, however debased or depraved by the fall, a yearning after some object more deserving of its entire homage, confidingness, and love, than the best or dearest objects that this world can supply. This instinctive yearning, which nothing earthly can ever satisfy, testifies to man's original destination and dignity. It is like a magnificent pillar of a ruined temple, which proclaims how noble an edifice that temple must have been in its primeval glory. It is, as it were, a spark of that celestial fire, which glowed with such brightness and warmth in man's bosom, in the morning of his innocence; and which even sin itself seems not to have entirely quenched, but left it still smouldering amidst the ruins of man's nature, as a witness to testify of God, and, by pointing to Him as man's rightful Sovereign, and only satisfying portion, to call back the wanderer to the forsaken path of primeval bliss. Yes! and since Jehovah formed man's heart as a throne for Himself, can it be supposed, that as long as man permits any idol, however attractive, to usurp that throne, he can enjoy true happiness, in time or in eternity? If he can, must it not be in spite of God? Must it not be by defeating God's design? Or, to state the question in a different form, since it will be at once and universally admitted, that no individual can be happy, in any worthy sense of the word, contrary to God's will, does it not necessarily follow, that if man can attain to true happiness, by lavishing on an earthly idol that supreme love which is God's exclusive prerogative and right, God must be Himself considered a consenting party to this arrangement, and thus be supposed to sanction that very usurpation of His prerogative, which, as a jealous God, He is uniformly

represented in Scripture as resenting with peculiar indignation and wrath?

Nor need we fear to leave the decision of this question to the experience of the most enthusiastic and successful votary of earthly love. Let him honestly declare the result of his experiment of endeavouring to find satisfying happiness in an earthly object's love, and let that object be as worthy of his affections, and requite them with a love as deep and as devoted as his idolatrous heart can desire.

Now we do not deny, that such love will be a source of enjoyment altogether superior, in purity and sweetness, to that which flows from any other earthly source. For such is the happiness linked, by the appointment of that God who Himself is love, with the indulgence of every pure and tender affection which He has implanted in our hearts, that, though he who makes an idol of any earthly object will assuredly pay the penalty of his guilt and ingratitude of God, in the intense anxieties and apprehensions inseparable from all idolatrous attachment, yet will he enjoy, we freely confess, in the sympathizing affection and endearing converse of the object of his heart's fondest love, a happiness to which no other, which any earthly source can supply, can for one moment be compared.

Yet even to him, in the moment of his heart's deepest bliss, would we fearlessly appeal, and ask him, does he feel perfectly satisfied? Is there no aching void within his heart? Is there no ungratified desire, which still torments him with a thirst, that all the enjoyments of the most devoted earthly love are utterly unable to quench? Does he not, after having reached the summit of his earthly wishes, as he fondly hoped it would prove, experience a sensation of disappointment, similar to that which is frequently felt by the traveller who is

scaling a lofty mountain? How often does *he* find, that when he has reached the point, which, as he gazed on it from below, appeared to him the summit of the mountain, he has been most painfully deceived; that still the object of all his ambition and exertions is far, far above him; and he must either toil on in fainting weariness, or rest where he is in bitter disappointment and despair!

And is not such the experience of the most successful votary of earthly love? Is it not even thus, that, after having reached the very point, in his pursuit of happiness, which he fondly fancied would prove the summit of his wishes, he is doomed to find that his flattering hopes have been disappointed—that he has indeed gained *a* point of considerable elevation, raised far above the gross atmosphere of debasing sensuality or sordid covetousness, from which he can command an extensive prospect of the beauteous scenery stretched out beneath him, and where he breathes a purer and serener air; but *has not* gained *the* point on which his desires and hopes were so fondly fixed—for that still heart-satisfying happiness is beyond his reach? And further, we must, in order to exhibit more adequately the insufficiency of this purest source of earthly enjoyment, advert to its *insecurity*, a consciousness of which, even if it does not continually haunt the idolater of earthly love, must, in spite of all his efforts to banish the fearful recollection, flash frequently on his startled soul the terrifying conviction, that the object of his idolatry is mortal; and that, therefore, a single moment may tear it from his arms, and dash his cup of earthly bliss from his lips *for ever!*

Oh! how must this dreadful apprehension come, at times, like a ghastly spectre, flinging the shadow of death over the scenes of brightest enjoyment, and

chilling the warm life-blood of happiness in the heart!

Now contrast with all this the happiness of the heart whose supreme affections are centred on the blessed God! But here, beyond all other themes, the utter inadequacy of human language to express the deeper or loftier emotions of the soul, when flowing from a divine source, is most painfully felt! For, what language of earth can convey the faintest conception of the blessedness of that man who has been enabled, by the divine power of the Holy Spirit, to choose as the object of his supreme affections the ever-blessed triune God; and (as far as such a blissful state is attainable on this side heaven) to love Him with the whole heart, and soul, and mind and strength! Still, however injured *such* a theme must be by every attempt to unfold its blessedness, I would desire, in humble dependence on divine grace, to point out some of the more prominent characteristics, which exalt the happiness flowing from the love of God so immeasurably above the happiness which flows from the sweetest earthly source.

If the happiness which pure love imparts be proportioned to the excellence of the object on whom it is fixed, must not the happiness which the love of the blessed God supplies be infinite as the perfections of its divine Object, and as superior to what the purest earthly love supplies as He is superior to the most excellent of the children of men? How exalted, then, above all earthly bliss must be the enjoyment which springs up in a Christian's soul, from the consciousness of having bestowed his heart's first and fullest affections on the only Being in the universe who is deserving of them!—the uncreated Author and Original of all excellence—the Object of the adoration of all the host of heaven—the

Fountain of all felicity—in whom all conceivable perfections, in infinite degree and concentrated glory, are combined ! Oh ! is not *this* an object, indeed, worthy of the heart's supremest love ? And must it not be unbounded bliss to centre it on *Him* ?

Must it not bring with it an elevating consciousness of our affections being ennobled, by being bestowed on *Him* who is the source of all real glory ? Does not His infinite greatness invest them with a dignity, which exalts them immeasurably above the most exalted earthly love—and His infinite goodness impart to them a sweetness, which as much transcends the sweetest earthly love ? To love God!—to love *Him* who is himself essential love ! essential goodness ! essential glory !—to love *Him* whom cherubim and seraphim adore and love ! oh, what ineffable bliss ! How does it touch on the bliss of angels ! How does it shed round the soul the atmosphere of heaven ! What *is* the bliss of angels ? Is it not to love God ? Is not this the essence of their perfect joy ? And what is the atmosphere of heaven ? Is it not the love of God ? And is not, therefore, the loving God supremely, even as the angels love *Him*—is not this to breathe even on earth the atmosphere of heaven ? Yes, to love *Him* who is altogether lovely—to love *Him* for His own sake, because of His infinite perfections, entitling *Him* to our supremest adoration and love —thus to love *him*, independently of the love of gratitude due to *Him*, as our all-bountiful Benefactor, to whom we are indebted for every blessing we either have or hope for,—this is indeed to come as near the bliss of celestial intelligences, and the spirits of the just made perfect, as in this world of clouded vision and crushing infirmity the child of God can hope to attain, as long as he is imprisoned in a vile body of sin and death ! Here, here indeed,

the human heart feels that it has reached its long-desired rest! Here, in the pure and purifying love of the ever-blessed God, its affections repose with full complacency—their every capacity for happiness filled—their every aspiration after infinite good and infinite enjoyment *satisfied*. As the needle, after all its tremulous agitations, when at length it turns to the point to which, by an invisible attraction, it is drawn, settles there and is at rest,—or as the dove, after all its weary wanderings over a deluged world, when at length it returned to the Ark, found there the rest it had sought in vain over the restless billows of the watery waste,—even so the human heart, when, after its tempestuous agitations and weary wanderings, in search of satisfying happiness amidst the objects of this unsatisfying world, it turns at last, drawn by a sacred but divine attraction to its God, immediately it settles there, as having found the centre to which all its affections and aspirations were instinctively tending, and is indeed—in the most blessed sense—at rest! No aching void is now felt within the soul! All is satisfied—and satisfying! No yearning desire for a more worthy object! The heart is fixed on Him who is alone, but who is perfectly, infinitely, worthy of its love. No secret apprehension that the object is idolatrously, and therefore sinfully, loved. There is no fear here, but of deficiency; for there is no possibility of excess. Could it be possible to love the blessed God too well? No lurking suspicion, that we have lavished our love on one who, however fondly attached, must often be found altogether impotent to relieve our sorrows, or administer to our joy! Here the heart is devoted to one who is almighty to comfort and to gladden; whose omnipotence can accomplish on our behalf whatever His infinite love desires; and whose smile not

merely can brighten this wilderness-world into a paradise, but even open in our hearts a little heaven! And, finally, here is no withering fear, that the object of our fondest affections may, by death, be torn in a moment from our embrace for ever; for here our love is fixed on “Him who only hath immortality,” and who will make the happiness that flows from Him, immortal as Himself!

But, it may be asked, Is not this love to a being so infinitely exalted above our comprehension as the unseen,* the self-existent God, the enthusiastic vision of a heated imagination? Is it not a sentiment for which no other affection we can cherish supplies any preparatory materials or emblematic type, by which we may be enabled either to comprehend its nature or to illustrate its influence? By no means. So far from this, there is not a pure affection of the human heart, flowing from any of those endearing relationships which he has himself appointed, and as it were consecrated, which was not (we feel convinced) intended at once to draw our hearts to the love of God, and to shadow out, however faintly it may be, the nature, influences, and manifestations of that love.

Whatever, then, is pure and powerful in filial or in wedded love—whatever is elevated and endearing in loyalty to a sovereign, or gratitude to a benefactor—whatever there is of truth or tenderness in that sacred bond of friendship which unites two kindred hearts in one,—all these are found harmoniously combined, but infinitely exalted, in the love which the humble Christian is privileged to cherish towards God. Nor can we hesitate to acknowledge, that whatever claims can be urged on our affections, connected with these relationships—claims similar

* See this objection most satisfactorily answered in Wilberforce's Practical View of Christianity, Chap. III., sec. ii.

in kind, but infinite in degree, exist on the part of the blessed God, viewed in the economy of redemption as the triune Jehovah, our Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, Comforter, entitling him to our supreme love, loyalty, gratitude, and confidence, as the most indulgent of fathers, the most beneficent of sovereigns, the most generous of benefactors, and the tenderest of friends!

Nor let it be said that this is a fanciful and unauthorized assumption, which can find no warrant in the Word of God. Why does God reveal himself in his Word, as standing towards his believing people in those very relationships? Why does he represent himself as our heavenly Father—as the Bridegroom of the church—as our supreme Sovereign, Benefactor, and Friend? Is it not that he may, by thus graciously lowering himself, as it were, in his amazing condescension, to the level of our finite capacities and human feelings, assist us to comprehend at once what is the nature of his love to us, and what should be the nature and effects of our responsive love to him? Is it not that he may teach us, instead of losing ourselves in bewildering metaphysical speculations, as to the character of the love we ought to feel for him, to look into our own hearts, and there watch the workings of every pure and precious affection which the human heart can cherish; and then, having discovered their development, to divest them of all that is earthly and infirm in their composition, and concentrate them, in all their purity and power, on his blessed self?

But it may, perhaps, be objected, that there is such an infinite disparity—such an impassable gulf of separation between the divine and human nature, that the exercise of those affections towards a fellow-creature cannot supply us with any analogy by which to comprehend, any standard by which to regulate,

our love to our adorable Creator! For that there must be such an essential difference, in the very nature and circumstances of the two cases, as to render it both unphilosophical and unscriptural to reason from the one to the other, in the manner I have stated above—or to derive even from the purest earthly affection any assistance in comprehending or cherishing the unearthly affection with which the Christian is commanded to love his God.

Now here, in answer to this, at first sight, apparently reasonable objection, the most stupendous manifestation of the divine love of which we have received any tidings, or can form any conception, bursts on our view! For here all the grace and glory of redeeming love pass before our astonished and enraptured gaze! Yes, in the Gospel scheme, that God whose nature and whose name is love has, as it were, anticipated and answered this very objection, by bringing himself within the reach of human comprehension and human affections; and this by an arrangement of such altogether amazing condescension and loving-kindness as would baffle our belief, were it not attested by evidence so unanswerable as to render it the most aggravated guilt to doubt, and eternal death to deny, this inconceivably glorious display of the love of God!

By this scheme we find the blessed God brought within the grasp of our faculties and affections, by his having himself become, in the person of the co- eternal and co-equal Son, a partaker of our nature, invested with all its essential attributes and affections, and even with its sinless infirmities and sorrows; and thus at once, if we may so speak, levelled to our understandings and endeared to our hearts. Now, I do not for one moment forget what ought to be unceasingly cherished in the believer's most grateful recollection, that it was the primary design

of God our Saviour, in this stupendous display of his love, to accomplish the redemption of our ruined race, by offering up on Calvary's cross, in the nature which had sinned, a full, perfect, and all-sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and working out an infinitely meritorious righteousness for the justification of all that believe on him. I do not forget that it was his primary purpose, in his incarnation, to enable himself not merely to stretch out the sceptre of his mercy to rebellious transgressors of his holy law, without infringing on the rights of his justice, shaking the stability of his government, or sullying the glory of his character, but even to make the salvation of the vilest sinners the means of placing, were it possible, the pillars of his government on a firmer basis, and pouring round every demand of his holy law, and every attribute of his adorable character, the splendour of a more glorious display, and the dignity of a more awful vindication. That this was the primary purpose of the incarnation of deity, in the person of God's own and only Son, we should ever most rejoicingly and gratefully remember during every step of our pilgrimage on earth, that it may quicken our gratitude, deepen our love, and stimulate our devotedness to Him who hath loved us with a love stronger than death, even the death of the cross. And we may feel assured that this will live throughout eternity in the grateful recollection of every redeemed and glorified saint, continually deepening their love to their adorable Redeemer, as the purchaser of all their bliss, and will give ever-increasing sweetness to the song of praise which all his ransomed people will lift up unceasingly before his throne, saying, with one heart and voice, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made

us kings and priests unto the Father, even unto Him be all praise, and honour, and glory, and blessing, for ever and ever."

Still we cannot doubt that there was another most important purpose to be accomplished by the incarnation of the eternal Son of God, which bears directly on the subject we have been engaged in considering; a purpose affording at once the most affecting testimony to the loving-kindness of God, and the most abundant provision for the felicity of man; and proving, with irresistible power of demonstration, the position I am desirous to establish, that the Gospel is promotive of true happiness!

The purpose to which I allude, as designed by the incarnation of the Son of God, in connexion with the happiness of man, is, to supply the human heart with an object on which to concentrate its supreme affections, which shall be at once so altogether worthy of its love, and suited to its sympathies, as to impart to it, in the very existence and exercise of that love, a satisfying fulness of joy.

And oh! what *can* the heart desire for this purpose that is not found in unsullied perfection, and inexhaustible fulness in Him who "in the beginning was with God, and was God," and who became man, even a man of sorrows, for our sake, and for our salvation?

Is it the excellence of the object on which its love is fixed? Here are all the divine perfections, if I may so speak, humanized—all the glory of the character of God softened, without being sullied, by passing through a veil of flesh! Yes! in Jesus the believer loves Jehovah! the altogether lovely One! on whose divine attractions, rendered yet more endearingly attractive by all the tender and touching sympathies of a kindred nature, he can gaze with devout, yet undazzled contemplation, and love him

as his brother, while he adores him as his God! Oh! what an exquisite adaptation is herein displayed to every desire and capacity of the human heart! All that is glorious in deity, combined with all that is tender in humanity—the adorable attributes of the Godhead wrought into the frame-work of a human form, and thus the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, appealing to our affections in the gentle accents of a human voice, and the softened tenderness of a human heart! What an object for the heart of man to rest upon, and on which to lavish all its boundless stores of love! And what the bliss of that heart which has been enabled to do so by the grace of God!

And look yet more closely to all the wonderful qualifications which this divine object possesses for fully satisfying the most enlarged desires of happiness which can be cherished by the human heart! Does it yearn for convincing evidences of the love of the object on which its affections are bestowed? Oh! are not such abundantly supplied by Gethsemane's garden, by Calvary's cross? Can we look there and dare to doubt the boundlessness of the Redeemer's love? Is it an assurance of sympathy in all its sorrows for which the heart longs, with that ardent desire which impels us to confide all our griefs in the bosom of a fond and trusted friend? Behold, in Jesus “we have not a high Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted, like as we are, yet without sin”—one who can sympathize with us in all our sorrows, and compassionate us amidst all our griefs, because he was himself emphatically a man of sorrows, and, beyond all the children of affliction that have ever trod the surface of our earth, most intimately acquainted with grief! Yes, there is not a species of sinless sorrow that can

agonize the human heart in which the Saviour cannot, from his own experience, sympathize with his suffering people! No path of trial that they can be called to tread, which he has not trodden before them! No cup of affliction which can be appointed for them to drink that he has not drained to the dregs. Poverty, persecution, insult, reproach, calumny, contempt—the treachery of trusted, the death of beloved, friends—bodily suffering, mental agony—yea! even that most appalling species which arises from the hiding of God's countenance—oh! he has felt them all! He can feel for his poor, weak, fainting members under the pressure of them all. And (transporting thought!) by the omnipotence of his almighty arm, and the plenitude of his divine consolations, He can support and comfort their sinking souls amidst them all! Join to this his infinite wisdom to guide and counsel them amidst all their perplexities—his infinite power to shelter and protect them amidst all their dangers—and all the inexhaustible resources of the Godhead at his command, to provide for their happiness in time and through eternity,—and surely we must be forced to feel that in the Lord Jesus Christ—even “God our Saviour”—the human heart is provided with an object for its supremest love, suited (to the utmost possible extent) both to its desires and its capacities for enjoyment—so that in loving this object supremely, and enjoying the assurance of his love, it enjoys as much of a foretasted heaven as can be enjoyed on earth! *

But perhaps it may be urged, Is it not presump-

* How fearfully do both Unitarianism and Popery labour to counteract all that is beneficent in this wonderful arrangement of divine condescension and love—the former by its denial of the Saviour's deity; the latter, by giving to the Virgin Mary, or other objects, that place in the sinner's confidgness and affection which the Saviour assumed our nature for the very purpose of appropriating to himself.

tion in a poor, weak, sinful worm of the dust, to aspire to love the infinitely holy and glorious God? Now, in answer to this objection, (if, indeed, it deserve an answer,) it must surely be sufficient to observe that we are expressly *commanded* (not merely permitted) to love the Lord our God, and this with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength—that we have the highest of all authority for pronouncing this to be the *first* and *great* commandment—and that the absence of this love is the primary and pervading sin of unrenewed human nature, the dark fountain of all human depravity, which brings in the whole world guilty before God.* Yea! and further, that in the Gospel scheme the very test by which the vitality of the professed faith in the Redeemer's infinitely and alone meritorious righteousness is to be tried, is our love of the God of our salvation! For, on the one hand, it is declared “that if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema!” accursed of God! And on the other, Jesus himself assures us, “If any man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and take up our abode with him!” If, then, the want of love to Jesus exposes the soul to the fearful anathema—the everlasting curse of an angry God; and if the abiding of the everlasting Father and his well-beloved Son within the soul, (which must bring heaven's blessedness into that soul,) be connected with its loving Jesus, then assuredly it were a very waste of words to labour by argument to prove that it is not presumption, even in a sinful worm of the dust, gratefully and reverentially to love God, since this is only to comply with the express command of

* This position is most triumphantly established in Doctor Chalmers' incomparable lectures on the Romans, where the principle of ungodliness is exhibited in all its awful features, as the uniform characteristic (amidst all the decorum of a Christian profession, and all the diversities of man's moral condition) of unregenerate and human nature.

God, (the violation of which involves the basest ingratitude,) and thus to fall in with the very purpose for which that God arranged and accomplished the whole scheme of redemption, even by the most stupendous display of divine love, to win back to himself the alienated affections of the human heart! And if, as we have seen, the heart, when thus given to God in Christ, becomes, as it were, a purified fountain of felicity, springing forth in streams of such holy joy as is quaffed by angels and archangels from the fountain-head of happiness in heaven, then surely our first position is undeniably proved, since it is clearly shown, that by providing the human heart with the *only* object for its supreme love which can fully satisfy its unbounded desires and capacities, the Gospel is promotive of the true happiness of man.

What indeed *can* be entitled to the name of true happiness if that which flows from the love of *such* an object may not claim it in a pre-eminent degree? What can be desired beyond the bliss imparted by the consciousness of loving and being loved by Him in whose smile of love the highest archangels find the very heaven of heaven to consist? To have *such a Guardian* watching over us continually with the tenderest affection, lavishing on us every moment the most endearing tokens of his love—to have *such a Guide* conducting us by the leading of his Spirit, as he guided the Israelites of old by the pillar of his presence, amidst all our weary wanderings through the wilderness of this world to the promised land of everlasting rest—to have *such a Friend* loving us with a love of which the fondest that ever glowed in a merely human breast can afford but the faintest emblem, and with all the tenderness of that heart which is the source of all pure love, in heaven or on earth, sharing in all our joys and all our sorrows, and brightening them both by his sym-

pathy and his smile. Oh! to be privileged, at all times, and under all circumstances, to approach this heavenly Friend in prayer, and in the perusal of his holy word, and thus to hold sweet communion and converse with him—to seek counsel from him in every difficulty, and consolation in every distress—to confide to his compassionate bosom our every grief, and repose in his loving arms amidst every anxiety that agitates our soul! Now join to all this the heartfelt happiness which every sacred ordinance—the services of the sanctuary, the Sabbath, the sacramental table—must impart, when viewed and enjoyed as a means of communion with this beloved Friend ;—the pure and holy joy which love to him sheds round every grateful effort to promote his glory, thus making a life of devotedness to him (as a dying saint once declared that he had found it to be) the happiest life in the world;—the process of assimilation to his character, which must result from habitual and endearing converse with him, as the Friend of our souls—which assimilation, by promoting our likeness to the blessed God, in every divine feature of his adorable character, must proportionably promote our true happiness, to the utmost extent of which our renewed nature is susceptible;—the prospect of spending an eternity of inconceivable blessedness in the immediate presence of this beloved Friend—seeing him, conversing with him face to face—rejoicing before him in the fulness of heaven's joy for ever and ever! Combine all these sources and materials for enjoyment—the purest, most exalted, and most satisfying which the heart of man can desire or grasp—and then judge whether the world's opinion of the religion of the Gospel—that it is calculated to wither every spring of gladness, and cloud the spirit with gloom—can be a correct one; or whether it be not such a libel against the blessed God that its origin must be as-

cribed to the enemy of God and man, the accursed father of lies.

If these things be so, oh! what monstrous ingratitude are they guilty of who requite *such* love as the Redeemer's with contemptuous indifference, spurning all His claims on their affections! and of what exquisite enjoyment, what alone-satisfying happiness, for time and for eternity, do those deprive themselves who refuse that righteous demand of God when He condescends to appeal to them, saying—"Give Me thine heart," and lavish on some fellow-worm those affections which are his rightful prerogative, and which can find in Him *alone* an object suited to their vast capacities for bliss! How will such bewail, with fruitless agony and self-reproach, throughout a lost eternity, their detestable ingratitude in having spurned God's righteous claims on their supreme love--their desperate infatuation in having flung away, for such trifles of a moment, the immortality of perfect blessedness, that was placed within their reach! Must not this harrowing reflection be a gnawing worm of remorse that will never die, but consume their self-accusing and tormented spirits with ceaseless anguish for ever? Yet such is the ingratitude, such the infatuation of every unconverted man, in whose heart the love of God has not been shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. Yes! monstrous as it may seem, the natural heart of man, so far from being as it ought to be, all love, and loyalty, and gratitude to the blessed God, is declared by the irrefragable testimony of Scripture, to be "enmity against Him!" And is not this testimony awfully confirmed by universal experience? What object is there, however worthless in itself, that the human heart, while unrenewed by divine grace, will not love in preference to God? Yes! though in right of His adorable perfections, He is entitled to our supreme love—and though, as our Benefactor, the Giver of our life and all its blessings, He is en-

tituled to our warmest gratitude—and though, as our Redeemer, He has even infinitely stronger claims on our gratitude and our love—and though it be undeniable, that in loving Him supremely, satisfying happiness can alone be found, still, such is the desperate depravity, such is the deplorable infatuation of our fallen nature, that the love of the blessed God is altogether a stranger to our hearts, till the Holy Spirit has introduced it there; and we will seek for happiness in any and every path, except in the only one where it can be found, till that blessed Spirit, by leading our souls into the love of God, turns our step into the paths of peace. Is not this an appalling picture of the human heart in its natural state? Not to love infinite perfection! Not to love the Benefactor who has bestowed life, and all that makes life dear! Not to love the Redeemer, who laid down His life in His love for us, and for the very purpose of winning our love! And *this* with a heart capable of, yea, and cherishing, the tenderest affection for *every* friend—the warmest gratitude to *every* benefactor, *except* the blessed God; a heart that responds gladly and warmly to the thousandth part of the love manifested by Him who died for us on Calvary, when that love is displayed by a fellow-worm. Oh! what aggravated guilt is involved in such peculiar, such exclusive contempt of God, and of His claims on our gratitude and love! What will be the feelings of those who are chargeable with it, when they shall see this despised, this insulted God face to face, and must endure the intolerable weight of His vengeance, kindled into intensest wrath by the rejection of His love! And what will be the anguish of bitter self-reproach, and agonizing remorse, which will torture their lost souls for ever, when they reflect on all the manifestations of God's love which through life they received—on all the unnatural and inexcusable ingratitude with which they requited that love—and

on all the happiness, on earth and in heaven, which love to God would have poured into their hearts, and which they have for ever lost; preferring the frown of His wrath to the smile of His love, and gaining nothing in exchange but an eternity of deeply merited wrath and wo! Oh! with what fervour of supplication should all who are conscious that the love of God is not yet implanted in their heart, pray that the Holy Spirit, (whose divine prerogative it is,) by an effectual manifestation to the soul of the love displayed on Calvary, would plant it there, that it may bring forth fruit unto everlasting life; and that having bloomed on earth in celestial beauty, and diffused the celestial fragrance of a holy life, it may be, after death, transplanted to its native clime, the heaven from which it sprung, to flourish there in undecaying bloom, throughout a bright and blissful eternity!

And how should those, whom the Holy Spirit has enabled to centre their affections on the blessed God, feel, and labour by every means in their power to testify their fervent gratitude for such a distinguishing token of God's unmerited love! How should they watch the holy flame of love to God with sleepless vigilance, lest it should begin to burn dim, or to wax cold—fan it by devout meditation, and converse on God's love, and all the glories of His adorable character—and avoid with scrupulous jealousy whatever would tend to sully its brightness, or to chill its warmth! How earnest should they be in their supplication, that the Holy Spirit, who first kindled, would continually cherish it by His divine influence, breathed over the soul! How carefully should they guard against all idolatrous attachment to earthly objects, and the indulgence in any temper or disposition, any scenes or society, any pursuits or pleasures, uncongenial with this heavenly affection, or that might provoke its divine Author and object to withdraw, even for an hour, the manifestations of His

love! How should they shrink, with the deepest abhorrence, from sin in every shape, as the chief hinderance to the enjoyment of that sweet communion with God, which this love inspires; and welcome, with grateful joy, every affliction by which that communion is promoted, the consolations of the Divine Comforter endeared, and the preciousness of a Saviour's love more fully prized, and more intensely enjoyed! With what cheerful composure, too, should they whose supreme love is fixed on God, regard all the changing vicissitudes of this varying scene, since they cannot, in the least degree, affect their supreme happiness, coming, as it does, direct from God Himself out of heaven, and therefore beyond the reach of being intercepted by any object on earth! What a holy solicitude should the possessors of such a treasure evince, that their deportment, in every condition and circumstance of life, should unanswerably testify, that in the possession of the love of God they are as abundantly rich, and as satisfactorily happy, as their hearts could desire! What a stamp of heaven should be impressed on all their conversation! and what a shrinking from every thing mean, defiling, or debasing, as so utterly unworthy of those, who are honoured with the highest honour that God Himself can bestow, in being the objects of His love, and being enabled to love Him with the concentrated affection of an undivided heart! Oh! what holiness, what heavenly-mindedness should these highly favoured ones display before the world, as well as cherish in their own souls! And how should they long for the appearing of the divine Object of their affections, when He shall come in His glory, and at the same time regard death, if it should come first, as a welcome friend—the messenger of mercy, since it comes to bring them into the immediate presence of Him they love—to see Him face to face, and to rejoice before Him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, for ever and ever!

CHAPTER II.

THE SERVICE OF GOD.

THE second ground on which I would rest the claims of the gospel to be regarded as the patroness of true happiness is, that it supplies the only sphere of service that can worthily and happily employ the exalted faculties, the only hopes that can fully satisfy the unbounded aspirations of the human soul.

That idleness is utterly incompatible with true happiness is universally acknowledged; and by none more readily than by those who are most enslaved by its bondage, and who are therefore most capable, from experience, of testifying to the influence which it exercises over its unhappy victims. In truth, from the very constitution of the human mind, the exercise of our faculties, and the employment of our time, in some pursuit or occupation, calculated to call our energies into healthful play, appear to be altogether indispensable for the enjoyment of true happiness. This being admitted, it necessarily follows, that the happiness resulting from the exercise of our faculties, and the employment of our time, must be proportioned to the excellence and attractiveness of the service in which they are engaged. And, consequently, the happiness which flows from their consecration to the service of God, must, in the very nature of things, as much surpass that which flows from their dedication to any other service, as the blessed God surpasses in essential excellence and glory, a weak wretched worm of the dust—as much as the pure unfading joys of heaven surpass, in every essential requisite for satisfying enjoyment, the polluted perishable pleasures of earth.

There are one or two considerations, which may tend to illustrate the superiority of that happiness which springs from the service of God; and—

I.—I would notice one, suggested by the subject of the preceding chapter, and at which we have already very briefly glanced. The service of God is, to a sincere believer, the service of his best, his dearest Friend—the service of the object of his heart's supreme affections; and this imparts to it a sweetness, that to be understood must be felt, for it is utterly beyond the reach of an unrenewed heart to conceive. How much it is in the power of love to sweeten every exertion—yea, and even every suffering—which may be encountered in the service of one round whom our heart has entwined its fond affections, is, indeed, well understood, from the delightful experience of their own souls, by many who have never felt the constraining influences of the love of Christ. But even they cannot conceive what indescribable sweetness *that love* imparts to every effort, which gratitude may prompt, to promote a Saviour's glory! It is this which makes His service to be indeed “perfect freedom,” and enables the believer to declare, that its “ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace.” It is love to Christ which links enjoyment with every exertion in His sacred cause—which turns duty into delight, and renders the devotedness of the life to Him its own exceeding great reward!

What sweet sensations thrill through the bosom of a grateful child, when employed in the service of the parent he so fondly loves! Or what pleasure which this wilderness-world can supply, is purer or more delicious than that which an affectionate spirit enjoys, when seeking, even by the most wearying labours, or self-denying sacrifices, to promote the welfare, or augment the felicity of the friend, who, for many a year of fond and faithful attachment, has shared, with the most endearing sympathy, its every sorrow and its every joy!

Faint, oh! how faint are all these, as emblems of

the pure, the exalted, the delicious joy, with which the heart of a Christian overflows, when he is seeking, by the consecration of every talent to the advancement of his glory, to express his love to his dear Redeemer—the friend of friends,—the benefactor to whom he is indebted for every blessing he enjoys, or hopes throughout eternity to enjoy!

With a heart glowing with the gratitude which a believing view of the love displayed towards Him on Calvary's cross cannot but inspire, must he not feel, in the service of such a friend, a happiness which has indeed less in it of earth than heaven? May not this with truth be affirmed of the happiness which flows from a beloved Saviour's service? For in what does the happiness of heaven, so far as it has been unveiled to our view, or can be brought within the grasp of our conceptions, essentially consist? Is it not in supremely loving, and from a principle of grateful affection and devout adoration, rejoicingly serving the ever-blessed God? Could we ask one of the angels who surround the throne of the Almighty, what is the source, the substance of all his blessedness, can we suppose he would hesitate for one second what reply to make, or that he would not instantaneously point to the throne of God, and say, "His I am, and Him I serve! and find in His love and in His service the fulness of joy, and in His presence pleasures for evermore!"

And if the angels, who never sinned, find such fulness of joy, such perfection of blessedness, in the love and service of God whom they adore as their Creator, Benefactor, and King, what a deepened emotion of delight must that love and that service impart to the *redeemed* sinner, when he regards his God under the endearing character of his Redeemer, and reflects on all the humiliation, and sorrow, and suffering to which, in His altogether inconceivable love, He stooped, to accomplish his redemption from the

everlasting shame and torment of a merited hell, and to purchase for him an undeserved inheritance of everlasting glory and blessedness in heaven!

Yes, when the believer meditates on the vast, the infinite amount of his obligations to his adorable Redeemer's love—when he thinks of the horrors of that place where “the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,” and says to himself, “*There*, but for my Saviour's love in dying for me, I must have spent an eternity of agony and despair!”—and then thinks of the day of “the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour,” and of the happiness of that world, where glorified spirits see God face to face, and dwell in the light of His countenance for ever and ever, and as the glorious vision passes before his dazzled eyes, exclaims in a transport of holy rapture, “*There*, through my Saviour's love in pouring out His blood for me, even unto death, upon the cross, I shall spend an eternity of unmixed, everlasting increasing bliss!”—can it be a source of wonder, that he should find the service of *such* a Benefactor a happy service—that he should delight to bear the yoke of *such* a Master—that he should rejoice in devoting his life to the cause of *such* a Friend? Yet *this* is the service the world deems a melancholy one! *This* is the yoke it thinks to be galling! *This* is the cause it shrinks from embracing, as identified, in its estimation, with unhappiness and gloom! Oh! that the blinded votaries of that world but knew the happiness they lose, both for time and for eternity, by preferring its service to the service of the Son of God!—that they could but taste, were it only for one hour, the sweetness of labouring in *His* cause, who has purchased for His people every precious blessing which the God of grace and glory can bestow, with his own out-poured blood! Then would they know, that there is more real happiness in *suffering* for His sake, than the most boasted *pleasures* which the

world they idolize can supply! Then would they understand, that by the fatal choice which they have made of the world's service in preference to the Saviour's, they are cheating their own souls of present happiness, as well as of eternal bliss—that they are flinging away the enjoyments both of earth and heaven—that they are purchasing everlasting anguish with present disquietude—that they are indeed forsaking their own mercies, and by listening to the suggestions of the father of lies, like our first parents, banishing themselves for ever from the paradise of God—from that garden of the Lord (as even this world becomes to those who have embraced the invitation of His love, and the yoke of his service) where they would be privileged, if adopted into His family of grace, to eat of the tree of life, and to walk in holy and happy fellowship with their reconciled God and Father, even as one walketh with a friend!

Nor should it be overlooked, in estimating the happiness which the service of God supplies, that this service involves that cheerful obedience to God's commandments, springing up from a principle of filial love, which must be productive of the purest pleasures to the renewed heart of a child of God. If all God's commandments are but the gracious expressions of His fatherly love, giving us those directions for the regulation of our conduct, which, in His infinite wisdom, He knows are indispensable for the advancement of our true happiness, must not obedience to them, flowing from the motives He Himself prescribes, be the surest path to that happiness, which He wishes His beloved children to enjoy? Can we for a moment insult the blessed God by the suspicion, that He ever issued a commandment for the regulation of his children's conduct, which it must not conduce to their happiness cheerfully to obey? Must not then the service of God, viewed in this light, as a course of cordial and consistent obe-

dience to his commandments, animated by a spirit of gratitude to Him for His stupendous love in the gift of His dear Son, and designed to express a thankful conviction, that whatever He commands is intended in love for the promotion of His people's happiness, and should therefore be complied with by them with cheerful satisfaction—must not, I say, His service, animated by *such* a spirit, and designed for *such* a purpose, be indeed the service of a happy heart? Is not, in truth, obedience to God's commandments, from such motives, and for such ends, the very essence of the happiness which our first father enjoyed, in the bright morning of his innocence, when he viewed every intimation of God's will as the language of a Father's love, and rendered to them all the cheerful homage of a thankful heart? Was it not the fearful experiment of seeking for happiness in the path of disobedience to the command of God which "brought sin into the world, and all our wo?" And will not man's primeval happiness be once more poured into the human heart, when love to God is once more enthroned in that heart, and renders the service of God as sweet to the renewed spirit as it was to that of Adam before the fall? And further, as a talented writer of our day has well stated the case, must it not be admitted, that God *can*, if He *wishes*, make His creatures happy? Whom, then, is it most probable He *will* exercise His omnipotence to make happy—those who love, or those who despise Him?—those who seek for their happiness in His service, or those who seek for it in the service of His enemy? for we *must* serve God or Satan. Can we have a moment's doubt on the subject? Assuredly not. If, then, God *can* confer happiness on his creatures, (and who that believes in a God doubts *this*?) does not reason, as well as revelation convince us, that He *will* confer it on His faithful servants who love and honour Him, not on

rebellious traitors, who despise and insult Him; and that his service must, therefore, be the only one in which true happiness can be found, even *such* happiness as man enjoyed in Paradise, before sin had withered the fresh bloom of Eden's beauty and bliss by its deadly blight?

Yes, in the service of God his Saviour, the believer does indeed find paradise restored! The sweet communion, which sin had interrupted, is again renewed, under circumstances more endearing, and with a happiness more exalted, than even Adam enjoyed before the fall. For how infinitely does the love displayed in our redemption, transcend that which creation displays! And, immense as were the obligations of Adam to his Almighty Benefactor, for the munificent gift of an immortal existence, and the paradise of blessings in which He had placed him; what, oh! what are even they to the believer's obligations to his Redeemer's love!

If, then, the happiness which springs from the devotedness of our time and talents to the service of a friend and benefactor, be proportioned to the disinterested generosity of his love, and the extent of our obligations to his bounty, what human language could convey any adequate conception of the happiness which a believer must experience in the grateful consecration of all his talents, affections, and energies to the service of Him who has manifested towards him a love, in comparison of which the most disinterested earthly love is utter selfishness—and has procured for him blessings, in comparison of which the most precious earthly benefits are nothing worth! For would it not be bordering on blasphemy to compare the most generous love which ever glowed in a human breast, with that which drew down the Son of God from the throne of heaven to a cross on earth? And would it not be a very mockery to compare the most valuable benefits which an earthly benefactor can be-

stow, with those which the Divine Benefactor, who died for us on Calvary, has procured for us, at the cost of *such* sufferings as no created intelligence will be able fully ever to comprehend?

I have dwelt more at length on this view of the subject, because I am convinced it is *only* when this spirit of grateful love to the God of our salvation is the animating motive of our exertions in His cause that His service will impart to the soul that abundant measure of pure and exalted enjoyment, for which I contend. To be productive of *such* enjoyment, our labours in His service must be labours of love. It must be the constraining love of Christ which, with its sweet attractions, draws our whole hearts and lives to Him, to be offered up as a thank-offering at the foot of His cross, if we would experience the ineffable delight which the ransomed people of the Lord have experienced in His service, in every age of the Christian church. As long as he is served grudgingly or of necessity, from a principle of slavish fear or sordid selfishness, and not of filial love and grateful devotedness, His service must be felt to be a state of wearying bondage, not of perfect freedom—its ways to be ways of irksomeness, and its paths to be paths of perplexity, instead of “ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace.”

And this is the reason why many of those who appear to be enlisted in the ranks of the faithful soldiers and servants of the Lord Jesus Christ feel, and by their clouded countenance and melancholy deportment, betray to the sharp-sighted observation of the children of the world that they feel His service to be a hard and heavy servitude; and thus, as far as their experience and testimony is concerned, contradict His own express declaration, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” And so they are easy and light indeed—but it is love which makes them so. When God the Holy Ghost puts them on the shoul-

ders of one in whose heart He has shed abroad the constraining influence of a Saviour's love, it is only *such* a heart can conceive how cordially, how intensely the Christian, when this love is enthroned in his supreme affections, delights to bear that burden, and to wear that yoke.

But if Christ be dreaded as a harsh task-master, not loved as the best of Masters—the most generous of Benefactors, what wonder if those who regard Him in such a light should feel no pleasure in His service, and should thus bring in a bad report of that goodly land, which all who love the Lord have always found to be indeed “a land flowing with milk and honey”—abounding with the most precious pleasures—the sweetest enjoyments which their souls could desire! Yes, let the Master be loved, and His service will be loved too—ay, even if it should demand the most laborious exertions, the most costly sacrifices, amounting to the abandonment of home and kindred and country, and all that the heart holds dearest of the objects of earth. Let but the sacrifice be felt to be for *His* sake, and that one thought will more than reconcile—will even endear it to the grateful Christian's heart. Ask the missionary, who has parted from the land of his birth, the friends of his youth, the beloved members of the dear domestic circle, round which his heart's fondest affections have been twined from life's earliest years—ask him, does he repent of having made such a sacrifice for his Saviour's sake; and will not the tear of gratitude and holy joy, glistening in his eye, tell you more eloquently than any words could do, that he has felt abundantly recompensed for the sacrifice, whatever the anguish it may have cost his heart! Yes, he will tell you, that amidst all the loneliness of his lot—amidst all the anguish of separation from country, friends, and home—amidst all the horrors of surrounding heathenism, in all its fearful shapes of idolat-

try, impurity, and blood, the hope of being honoured as the instrument of bringing even one perishing fellow-sinner out of the dreary darkness of heathen superstition into the gladdening light of Gospel truth, and thus at once promoting a fellow-immortal's everlasting welfare, and his beloved Redeemer's glory, has filled his spirit with such heart-cheering comfort, as he would not have exchanged for all the enjoyments this world could supply. He will tell you, that his Saviour's smile has so brightened the solitude of his lonely dwelling, amidst the waste of heathenism as to make the wilderness around him "to rejoice, and blossom as the rose!"

Look at the history of the greatest of merely human missionaries, the Apostle of the Gentiles—for the greatest of all missionaries was a Divine One, even the Lord Jesus Christ. In St. Paul we see the example of one in whose heart the love of the Saviour was indeed enthroned in its rightful supremacy, and whose life was one uninterrupted sacrifice of thanksgiving to the God of his salvation. Now, what was *his* experience as to the influence on his happiness, of this entire dedication of the life to the Saviour's service? Is it possible, I would ask any unprejudiced mind, to read the record of his inward feelings, which he has left to us in those epistles, where he has unveiled to our view the most secret recesses of his heart, without having the conviction irresistibly impressed upon us, that St. Paul, by the unreserved surrender of his whole heart and life to the love and service of God his Saviour, had attained, and was conscious that he had attained, to the very highest summit of human happiness which can be reached on this side heaven? That, amidst all the persecution, reproach, and "suffering above measure," with which he was incessantly assailed, his heart was the constant abode of a peace which indeed "passeth all understanding," and of a joy which is altogether

“unspeakable and full of glory?” Was it not this consciousness which prompted that sublime reply to King Agrippa, which breathes the noblest spirit that ever emanated from Christian love—“I would, to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds?”

Were any one, then, to ask me, What path shall I pursue, in order to arrive at that happiness which is the object of universal solicitude and search? I would answer, without one moment’s hesitation—follow the example of St. Paul. At the foot of the cross surrender up yourself, soul and body, as a thank-offering to Him, who on that cross surrendered up himself as an expiatory sacrifice for your salvation. Let the love of Christ be henceforward the master-passion of your soul—the ruling principle of your life. Consecrate, as a missionary at home, if not abroad, your every talent to the advancement of His cause. Resolve, in humble reliance on divine grace, that for the future His glory shall be the object to which every other shall be subordinate in your estimation, and which, by every means within your reach, you will labour to promote. Act honestly, consistently, perseveringly on this plan; and if you are not successful in your search after happiness, why I can only say, you will be the first who has ever met with disappointment in pursuing such a course. Yes, the *very first* who could ever say with truth, “With me to live is Christ,” and yet be obliged to add, “*Notwithstanding*, the secret of true happiness is still to me unknown. I have made the experiment of cordial, grateful devotedness to His service, and must with bitter disappointment confess, that true felicity is not to be found there.” And why should you suppose that such a disastrous result of this experiment should be reserved for you alone, of all that have ever tried it, since Christ came upon earth?

Oh! that I could persuade you, whoever you are that are now reading these lines, if you have never yet made this experiment for yourselves, this day, this hour, this moment to commence it. In very truth, dear fellow-traveller to eternity, I have no misgivings as to the result: no darkening doubt flings even a passing shadow over my assurance, (which rests on the firm basis of the word of that God who is truth,) that if, relying on the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, you will seek henceforth for happiness in the service of God's well-beloved Son, while resting exclusively your hopes of salvation on His infinitely and alone meritorious sufferings and righteousness, you *shall not* be disappointed in your search, but shall be enabled to add *your* testimony on behalf of the blessedness of His service—yes, to add it, with a joyous and a thankful heart, to that of all His glorified saints now in heaven, and all His faithful servants now on earth, who will all with one heart and voice declare, that to those who, being privileged to regard the triune God under the endearing character of their Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and Comforter, confidently trust, devoutly adore, and supremely love Him, His service is the source of the purest, the sweetest, the most satisfying happiness which the heart of man can desire, or the loving-kindness of God can bestow!

CHAPTER III.

THE SERVICE OF GOD.

II. THERE is another point of view, in which the service of God can be shown to be conducive to the highest happiness which can be enjoyed on earth,

and that is, by imparting the elevating and delightful consciousness, that in this service the faculties and energies of the soul are employed in the noblest occupation, and directed to the most exalted end, which the spirit of man, in the loftiest aspirations of a laudable ambition, can desire. As the heart can only feel fully satisfied when it is supremely fixed on God, inasmuch as He is the only object who can fill all the capacities for enjoyment of its boundless affections, so, in like manner, the soul can only feel fully satisfied when it is entirely devoted to God, inasmuch as His service is the only sphere of exertion which can altogether suit and satisfy the comprehensive grasp and aspiring ambition of its immortal energies. Let not the shadow of a sound, the bugbear of a name, terrify us! Let not the word "ambition" alarm us, as if it were necessarily identified with arrogance, vain-gloriousness, and pride! There is a happier sense of the word—a holy application of its meaning—in which, so far from shrinking from it with aversion and alarm, we ought to contemplate and cherish it with affection and delight. Yes, there is a praiseworthy ambition, a legitimate aspiration after greatness, a laudable desire for glory, honour, and immortality. The soul, originally created in the likeness of God, and destined for the high and holy employment and happiness of holding communion with God, and consecrating its heaven-born faculties to His service, has implanted in it, by His own hand, a desire for true greatness, which can only find its satisfying fulfilment in that communion and that service. And so far is *this* desire from being in itself sinful, that (we doubt not,) it was implanted in our nature by God, for the very purpose of thus drawing the spirit, in its aspirations after glory, to Himself!

It is not, then, the *existence*, but the *misdirection* of this desire, which constitutes its sinfulness. It is the seeking to quench its burning thirst in the pol-

luted streams of earthly ambition and applause, instead of the pure fountain of God's favour and service. It is the degrading to the worthless objects of this world's idolatry, those faculties and energies which were designed to soar up to heavenly things, and grasp (for this is more than permitted, is even commanded,) the glory of God. Nor is this degradation more sinful in the sight of God, than destructive of the happiness of man. For, as the heart must ever feel a restless craving, an aching void, till its supreme affections are fixed on God, so must the soul feel and mourn over a conscious degradation and dissatisfaction so long as its energies are devoted to any service except the service of God. It is only when they are consecrated to this, their proper sphere and end, that they feel that they can expatiate in their full freedom—that they can expand their full capacities—that they are invested with their full dignity—and attain to their full enjoyment. There is a feeling of unmingled satisfaction in the conviction that they are linked with whatever there is of essential greatness and glory in the universe. Yes, by seeking his happiness in the service of God, and making the glory of God his supreme aim and object, the Christian feels that he is identified, by congeniality of sentiment and similarity of pursuit, with all the glorified inhabitants of heaven. He feels that he can claim brotherhood with cherubim and seraphim, and is allied, by the closest ties of family affection, with all those celestial intelligences which delight to do the will of God. Yea, he feels that he has the same mind that was in Christ Jesus,—that he is, indeed, one in spirit with Christ, and Christ with him,—when he is enabled by divine grace to say, as his divine Master said in the days of His flesh, "My meat and drink is to do the will of the Father who hath sent me, and to finish His work;" and to make it the object of his supreme solicitude, so as to consecrate all his time

and talents to the advancement of the glory of God during the period of his earthly pilgrimage, that he may be able at its close, with humble gratitude, to adopt the language of Him who, as *His* earthly career was just drawing to its close, addressed His Father in those memorable words, “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, I come to thee.”

Oh! must not he who is thus identified in the object of his devotedness, and the source of his happiness, with angels and archangels, and even with the Lord of angels, be acknowledged to have discovered the secret of true happiness? Can it require laboured demonstration to prove that true substantial satisfying happiness must be the portion of that man, and of that man *alone*, who is seeking for it where the host of heaven find it, and where the Son of God, in His human nature, found it—even in doing the will and promoting the glory of the blessed God? Nor let it be objected, that the happiness flowing from this source, even that gratification of the inherent desire for true greatness, which results from the elevating consciousness of being thus linked with every glorious being in the universe, and participating in all their glory, is either the offspring of arrogant self-complacency, or the parent of presumptuous pride. No, no; for still the love of God is the pure passion which prompts, and the glory of God the disinterested object which consecrates every exertion that the grateful Christian makes, while devoting all his talents to the advancement of his Saviour’s cause. Nor does he desire for one moment to forget (and the reflection must ever cherish the deepest humility as well as gratitude in his soul,) that he is altogether indebted to the divine influences of the sanctifying Spirit, both for the holy desire which first prompted him to seek for true happiness and glory in this consecration of

himself to the service of his God, and for the sustaining strength which has since enabled him, with unquenched ardour and persevering patience, to hold on his heavenly course. He knows, that if left to himself his ambition would never have soared heavenwards; would never have mounted higher than the poor pretensions of earthly rank—the passing breath of applause from a few fellow-worms—the perishable pageantry of earthly glory. How, then, can he feel proud, however justly he may rejoice in the consciousness of having been the recipient of the influences of divine grace, attracting him to the source of all true greatness and happiness, and impelling him by a secretly and sweetly irresistible impulse, to seek for both, successfully, in the love and service of a Saviour-God? No! he may, he *must* exult in the glorious liberty with which Christ has made him free, the more than earthly dignity by which Christ has made him great. But in his exultation there is no presumption—in his rejoicing no pride. If he, a vile, miserable worm of the dust has been taken from the dunghill of corruption, where he lay festering in his sins, to be set among the principalities and powers of heaven, and, in right of his Redeemer's merits, made to inherit the throne of glory, however he must rejoice, with wondering gratitude, at the miracle of condescending grace which the God of glory has wrought on his behalf, and feel a joy which in one sense must surpass the bliss of angels—oh, surely no proud self-sufficient boastings can for one moment mingle with his joy!

In thus maintaining the superiority of the happiness flowing from that divinely-implanted aspiration after greatness, which prompts its possessor to seek for the honour which cometh from God, and the felicity which is to be found in His service, and which we have proved to be compatible with the profoundest humility of soul, I am not forgetful that there are

many objects in themselves allowable, (or even commendable, when subordinated to the service of God and sanctified by the influences of His Spirit,) to which men may devote their energies and affections, and which will supply a measure of satisfaction proportioned to the excellence of the object which thus engages their talents and their time. But I still contend that the happiness derivable from the service of God, immeasurably transcends that which the noblest earthly object that ever engaged the faculties of the human soul can supply.

For instance, a monarch may devote himself to the advancement of the national prosperity and glory of the people over whom he reigns, according to his standard of what constitutes a nation's welfare and greatness, and yet be altogether uninfluenced by a desire to promote the glory of God. A statesman may, in like manner, labour honestly and zealously to advance his beloved country's interests, and thus earn the reputation of a disinterested patriot, while his heart is altogether a stranger to the influences of a Saviour's love. The soldier may fight his country's battles with undaunted courage and patriotic ardour, and yet have never enlisted under the banners of the Captain of salvation as a soldier of the cross. A benevolent man, whose desire to alleviate the sufferings and augment the happiness of his brethren of mankind, may be utterly unscriptural in its origin and aims, and exclusively regard their temporal weal or wo, may deserve, in one sense, the exalted name of a philanthropist, and win for himself the esteem and gratitude of his fellow-men.

Another man may devote his energies to intellectual pursuits,—may seek to extend the researches of science or the resources of literature,—he may strike out some valuable discovery connected with those arts which increase our comforts,—or add some precious acquisition to the treasures of knowledge,—and

thus become, in an important sense, a benefactor to mankind; while all the time the God of intellect is not even acknowledged, much less adored, and receives from him neither the homage of his understanding nor the thank-offering of his heart. And in the various departments of professional pursuit, men may seek, by the path of diligent exertion and honourable competition, to rise to eminence, and thus at once advance the interests of their respective professions, and secure a competent provision for themselves or for their families; and, at the same time, be utterly devoid of one spark of genuine love to God, or of grateful solicitude to promote His glory.

Now, nothing can be farther from my intention, than to insinuate a censure on these or similar objects of human devotedness and exertion, as if in themselves they were to be regarded as deserving only of condemnation or contempt. Nor have I the smallest desire to deny, that there is a high degree of satisfaction linked with the spirit of sincere, even though not Christian, patriotism and philanthropy—with scientific and intellectual pursuits, even though unhallowed by their consecration to the service of God—and with the honourable and successful struggle for professional eminence, even though it be not sought and valued (as it unquestionably ought to be,) only as a means of more abundantly glorifying the Giver of all good. I am well aware, that in whatever proportion a man rises above sensual and selfish pursuits and pleasures, and devotes his time and talents to objects more worthy in themselves of his esteem, and more calculated to advance the welfare (even though not the eternal welfare,) of his fellow-creatures, in that very proportion will he enjoy a degree of satisfaction, raised above the low and debasing gratifications of the votaries of a grovelling selfishness, and the slaves of sensual lusts. The breast of the genuine patriot and philanthropist must glow with many a

gladdening emotion while planning and executing their generous and exalted schemes for the welfare of their country or the happiness of mankind, or contemplating the delightful results of their successful exertions. The votary of science cannot but experience a sensation of elevating joy, when some sublime discovery in the fields of Nature bursts upon his view; or the marvellous mechanism of the material world is more fully developed, in its wondrous displays of wisdom and of power, to his mind. The man of intellect must taste some of the most pleasurable emotions, of which mere earthly sources are the spring, when he feels the powers of his mind enlarged and elevated by fresh acquisitions of knowledge; or his soul enraptured by the fascinating visions, which the imagination, by its magic wand, can conjure up before its votary's dazzled and delighted gaze.

The hero may triumph, with legitimate rejoicing, when he sees his efforts for his country's freedom or glory crowned with success; and the professional man feels a warm glow of allowable satisfaction, when the character of his profession is exalted, or a provision for his family secured, by his arduous exertions in that sphere of labour to which he has devoted his energies and his time.

All this I most willingly admit; but still contend that the happiness which any of these services can supply, is, in every point of view, altogether inferior to that which the service of God supplies; and that in them all there would be an immense increase of happiness, the purest and the most exalted, in its nature and influences, by the infusion of a spirit of piety into the hearts of their several votaries, shedding round all their pursuits, and all their accompanying enjoyments, a celestial halo, beaming with the brightness of the glory of God. We feel this distinction to be one of the very first importance. We are willing, indeed, to concede all that can be reason-

ably required as to the claims on our esteem, or the capability of imparting enjoyment, possessed by the various objects of earthly admiration and pursuit to which we have adverted. But still we are most desirous to maintain, in connexion with our subject, the immeasurable superiority which the service of God possesses, both as an object of supreme excellence, deserving of our highest esteem and regard, and as a source of supreme felicity, capable of imparting to the soul the only really satisfying happiness which can be enjoyed on earth. It is this, for example, which stamps on the office of the Christian minister such a surpassing dignity, when he is viewed as an ambassador of Christ, whose exclusive object is the advancement of his divine Master's glory—a dignity so essentially divine, that we do not hesitate to pronounce the humblest pastor, in the most obscure parish of Christendom, who is faithful to his ordination vows, a more exalted personage in the estimation of Jehovah, and a happier being in himself, than the mightiest monarch in the universe, whose aim, however otherwise elevated, does not seek to promote the glory of God. What office, indeed, can be imagined more glorious, or more delightful, than that of the faithful minister who supremely loves his divine Master, and sincerely seeks, by every exercise of his ministerial influence, to promote a beloved Saviour's glory! Oh! what a grandeur does this consideration fling around his every address from the pulpit—every prayer or pastoral visit—every word of affectionate admonition to the lambs of his flock—every attendance on a sick or dying bed! When he feels that he is, in the humble sphere of instrumentality assigned to him, a fellow-labourer with the blessed God, in that glorious work which engaged the divine mind from the ages of eternity, and drew down the everlasting Father's well-beloved Son from the glories of His celestial throne to a manger and a cross on

earth—what unutterable happiness must flow from such a thought as this, into the faithful pastor's heart! Who of the children of men is privileged to experience a purer or more exalted felicity than *such* a pastor is entitled to enjoy, especially when he sees his labours of love in some measure crowned by the divine blessing with success? Would it not be utterly superfluous to compare *his* happiness with that of the man who profanes the sacred office intrusted to him, by prostituting it to the degrading purposes of professional advancement, or personal applause; or wastes the life which he has so solemnly dedicated to God, in the frivolities of worldly society, the fascinations of literature, or the indulgence of inglorious ease? Is it necessary to weigh in the balance of the sanctuary, the happiness of the faithful apostle, compared with that of the perfidious traitor, and such is every ordained minister who does not live devotedly to the glory of God? Need we advance arguments to prove that a John, a Peter, or a Paul, was happier than a Judas? And, I repeat it, is not every unfaithful minister a Judas? Does not every minister who solemnly promises, at his ordination, to devote himself exclusively to the advancement of *God's* glory, and yet afterwards seeks *his own*, and makes the holy office an instrument for accumulating worldly wealth, or aggrandizing himself with worldly honour, or indulging in intellectual pursuits, while neglecting the duties of his sacred office—does not every such minister virtually betray the Son of man? And need I endeavour to prove that such traitors to a Saviour's cause cannot be as happy as those faithful stewards who honestly and gratefully consecrate themselves and all their talents to the advancement of their Master's glory?

Nor should it be overlooked, in estimating the happiness that flows from this grateful consecration of all his talents to his beloved Master's glory, that

the faithful pastor derives the most exalted enjoyment from the reflection, that he is advancing, in the very same proportion in which he advances his Master's glory, the everlasting happiness of his brethren of mankind. He knows that if he succeed in drawing those with whom he pleads to the Lord Jesus Christ, their happiness for time and for eternity is secured; for that in this infinitely precious Saviour they will possess *all* that can confer satisfying and everlasting enjoyment. What unspeakable joy, then, must a faithful minister feel, when he thinks that every sinner whom he is instrumental in winning over to Christ, is another gem added to his beloved Saviour's crown —another voice added to the choir of heaven! With what unutterable delight must he look forward to the day of Christ's glorious appearing, when all to whom his ministry has been blest, shall be his glory and crown of rejoicing in *that* day! How will his own fulness of joy, in the presence of "God his Saviour," be increased to overflowing by witnessing and sharing the infinite and everlasting happiness of every fellow-heir of glory, who was led by the divine blessing of the Holy Spirit, on his labours of love, to the foot of the Saviour's cross! When he hears their voices blending with his own in the song of praise "to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb," and feels his own bliss deepened by the participation of theirs, will he not then feel abundantly recompensed for all the watchings and anxieties, the tears and trials of his ministerial life? Will it not then appear indeed incontestable, that by devoting himself unreservedly to the service of the God of his salvation, he was securing the highest amount of happiness, both for time and for eternity, which his heart could desire, or God, in the infinitude of His love, bestow?

But we would not confine our observations to the sacred office of the ministry, where seeking any other aim than God's glory involves the guilt of the basest

and most daring perfidy and perjury, as being a perfidious and perjured violation of the minister's solemnly-pledged ordination vows. We would contend for the truth of our position, in connexion with every other profession and pursuit that can engage the mind of man.

And, to commence with the most exalted station which can be occupied by man during his abode on earth, what source of enjoyment, which the possession of kingly power is supposed to be capable of supplying, was not accessible to that truly Christian monarch who swayed, for more than half a century, the sceptre of these realms, and who was deservedly venerated and loved as the friend and father of his people—whose memory will ever be embalmed in their grateful affection and esteem? Need I say that I speak of George the Third? Now, what I would suggest, in connexion with our subject, is,—was not the happiness enjoyed by this monarch, as the sovereign of a mighty empire and an attached people, unspeakably heightened and sweetened to him, by his deep and fervent piety, which led him to lay down, as it were, his crown at his beloved Saviour's feet—to feel and to avow his fealty to the King of kings—and to prove, by every action of his life, that he ever remembered that he held his sceptre but as a solemn trust, reposed in him by the Sovereign of the universe, and to be exercised entirely for the advancement of His glory.

Can we for one moment imagine, that there was not a joy flowing into *his* soul, from this sublime and elevating consciousness, that imparted something of a heavenly, yea, of a godlike character to the happiness which he derived from his every effort to promote the welfare of the people that he loved? Was not his devotion to the service of his salvation a source of enjoyment to that Christian monarch's heart, immeasurably superior to what the pageantry of royal

pomp, or the pride of royal power, can afford? Did not the ennobling reflection, that in the whole course of his administration of his royal prerogative, his honest aim and object was to promote at once his people's welfare, temporal and eternal, and the glory of his God, fill his heart with a peace and joy that neither domestic afflictions nor public calamities could disturb—that opened within his own bosom a sanctuary into which he could at all times retreat for rest and consolation, amidst the din of politics and the cares of empire, and there enjoy peaceful and gladdening communion with his Father and his God—and that impressed even on the wanderings of his mind a celestial stamp, summoning before his hallowed imagination the visions of heaven, breathing into his enraptured ear the music of the skies, and giving him the anticipated society of angels, even while yet a dweller upon earth?

Oh! who that feels in his bosom the generous throbings of loyalty and love to the youthful and inexperienced sovereign that now sways the sceptre of these realms, can forbear to pour out, on her behalf, the fervent prayer, that He, in whose hands are the hearts of kings, would by His grace dispose and enable her to walk in her sainted grandfather's footsteps, following him even as he followed Christ—making in all things, as he did, the word of her God the guide, and the glory of her God the object, of all her actions, whether in domestic or in public life?—that so her happiness may be hallowed, and her sorrows (for sovereigns can claim no exemption from these,) may be soothed by His Spirit and His smile—and that having, through a long and glorious reign, swayed a sceptre of righteousness over a loyal and loving people, enthroned in their affections and esteem, as the example of all that is most estimable and amiable in a Christian wife and mother, as well as all that can dignify and endear the character of a Christian sovereign, and the patro-

ness of all that can promote the highest interests of the vast empire committed to her charge, she may, at a distant period, in a good old age, exchange an earthly crown for a heavenly—even for that crown of unfading glory which a Redeemer has purchased with his own blood for all, whatever be their earthly rank, who have loved, confided in, and glorified Him here below!

What we have thus shown, as exemplified on the throne, may be equally illustrated by the example of the most exalted and influential stations, next to the throne, which can engage the energies of the mind of man. Look, for example, to a class of character which commands so large a measure of our admiration, esteem, and love—a Christian British senator! See this exalted character embodied in one of the brightest ornaments of Christianity—one of the noblest benefactors of mankind—that truly Christian patriot and philanthropist, the late William Wilberforce. Who that has read with an impartial spirit the history of his life, and has observed, from the period he entered on his Christian career, with what unbroken perseverance and consistency he consecrated his splendid talents to the noblest of all objects, the happiness of man, as combined with the glory of God—who, I say, that has observed this, and traced its results in the experience of his heart, as developed in the record of his life, can refrain from acknowledging that the grateful consecration of influence, talents, heart, and life, to a Saviour's service, is the direct path to the highest happiness attainable on earth! Study the character of this distinguished servant of the Lord. See every noble principle, every generous affection, which the Gospel implants and cherishes, there displayed! Behold him, in the midst of political strife, enjoying a calm within, even the peace of God, which, like the haleyon's wing, spreads its tranquillizing influence over the stormy agitations of his breast, when ruffled

by the conflicts of his public life! Mark, how every Sabbath (and oh! that all our statesmen and senators would reverence the Sabbath as he did!) brought to his spirit a blessed release from earthly cares and earthly sorrows, and breathed over his soul a sweet foretaste of the blessedness of the celestial Sabbath—the rest that remaineth for the children of God! Read his letters, which so felicitously express the outpourings of a heart overflowing with gratitude to the God of all his mercies, and enjoying every blessing which that God had lavished on him with an intensity of delight, a peculiar relish, which only the children of God can ever taste—and then say, is not true religion promotive of true happiness? Does not Christianity invest exalted rank, commanding talents, extensive influence, with peculiar capacities for enjoyment, and render them channels for conveying the purest pleasure into the human heart, by leading her faithful votaries to employ them all as instruments for advancing the glory of their God?

Compare Wilberforce, (and how fervently should we pray that *his* mantle may fall on those who now are intrusted with the reins of government!—that, like him, they may seek in all their measures the guidance of God's glory,) I will not say with profigate or unprincipled statesmen, who have sought place and power only as the means of gratifying their own ambition or more grovelling lusts, but compare him even with his own illustrious friend—one of the purest patriots that ever England could boast of—one who loved his country with the most ardent affection, and laboured to promote her welfare with the most disinterested zeal—compare, I say, Wilberforce with even Pitt, and must we not feel, that by the consecration of all his talents to the service of his God, there was a brighter halo of glory shed round the character of Wilberforce than encircles even that of his highly-gifted and lofty-minded friend! Must we not also

feel that in the heart of the faithful servant of God there was a depth of happiness, secure from the storms of earth, and sweetened by the smile of Heaven, which neither the generous ardour of a patriot's zeal, nor the grateful homage of an admiring country, could impart to the bosom of the illustrious Pitt!

One other example, in illustration of our subject, will suffice—the example of one who filled an exalted station on the English judicial bench, with such honour to himself, and such benefit to his country, Sir Matthew Hale. When we observe his distinguished talents consecrated to his divine Master's service, and all that claims our respect and admiration for high intellectual powers and extensive legal knowledge, combined with all that can command our esteem and love for whatever is most venerable and attractive in the Christian character, surely we must confess that the high and holy object to which *he* devoted all the influence that his talents and station afforded him, at once invested his character with a dignity, and imparted to his soul a happiness, immeasurably superior to what those talents and that station, if not thus consecrated to a Saviour's service, could have supplied! And cheering it is to contemplate such incontestable evidence, (confirmed, we rejoice to think, by the testimony of many living witnesses,) that the highest attainments and professional elevation at the bar and on the bench, are compatible with the most attractive exhibition of the Christian character and the most entire devotedness to the cause of Christ.

We would also observe, that in thus seeking to make the talents intrusted to his care instrumental in promoting the glory of God, the believer, *whatever* be his professional pursuits, (for our observations will equally apply to *every* lawful pursuit, the humblest as well as the most exalted—to *every* servant of God, the peasant as fully as the prince,) enjoys a pleasure peculiarly gratifying to his benevolent heart, in the

reflection that he is promoting, along with the glory of God, the *everlasting* happiness of his brethren of mankind. This opens a noble view of the result and reward of his labours, which pours the purest enjoyment into his breast. Yes, it is unspeakable joy to a child of God, who has imbibed the spirit of Him that was divine love incarnate, to look forward to the *eternal felicity* of the objects of his benevolent solicitude, as the rich recompence of all his labours of love on their behalf! It is that which raises *his* exertions for the good of his fellow-men so immeasurably above those of the most disinterested and devoted patriot or philanthropist, who aim no higher than to advance the *temporal* welfare of their fellow-creatures, and imparts to those exertions so much a more enlarged and exalted enjoyment! To be instrumental in rescuing fellow-travellers to eternity from *everlasting misery* and leading them to the attainment of *everlasting happiness*, who can describe the god-like pleasure which this must communicate to a Christian's heart! And how must the joy *he* feels in the contemplation of such a recompence of his labours of love on behalf of his brethren of mankind, as much surpass that of the purest philanthropist who labours only for the promotion of their *temporal* good, as the interests of eternity surpass those of a few fleeting hours!

Whether, then, we look to the throne, the senate, or to any of those professional pursuits which engage the energies of the human mind, we cannot but feel convinced that Christianity provides, not merely for the most faithful discharge of the duties devolving on those who are intrusted with the awful responsibility attached to exalted station, superior talents, and extensive influence, but also supplies them with materials for the most abundant enjoyment, by rendering the talents committed to their charge the means of gratifying, to the utmost extent, the enlarged de-

sires of a benevolent heart, in the promotion of the interests and the happiness of their brethren of the family of man, not merely for the few passing years of this fleeting span of time, but for the endless ages of eternity.

When, therefore, we calmly consider even the few examples which have been adduced, (and it would be easy to add to the list illustrious names in every department of intellectual or professional pursuit,) or view the subject in connexion with the various relationships of life, must we not be constrained to adopt the conclusion, that true religion is promotive of true happiness, by supplying the energies of the human mind with a sphere of exertion, and directing them to the attainment of an object, which are, and which *alone* are commensurate to their vast capacities, and impart a feeling of solid and substantial satisfaction, from the conviction that they are suitably and worthily employed—that the service in which they are engaged is the noblest, and the end they have in view the most glorious, which the mind can grasp or the heart can desire, even the eternal glory of God, and the eternal happiness of man—and that in this consciousness there is a source of pure and sublime enjoyment which approximates, by the closest and most identifying resemblance, the character of man to the character of the blessed God, and the pursuits and pleasures of the servants of God in this world to those of the seraphim before the throne—and thus makes the happiness of earth the very antepast of the bliss of heaven?

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

THERE is another consideration connected with this view of our subject, that strikingly shows the

superiority of the happiness which flows from the consecration of all our faculties and talents to the service of God, over that which flows from their devotedness to any other service in which they can be engaged. The consideration to which I allude is briefly this. The happiness which flows from the latter is liable to interruption or total destruction, from some of those numerous (casualties, as they are improperly called, but really) providential visitations, to which all the children of men, no matter what may be their rank, or influence, or prosperity, are alike and inevitably exposed. The most ardent, and for a time successful, votary of this world may be suddenly stopped in his brilliant career, by the stroke of sickness, or the pressure of some of those overwhelming calamities which altogether blight the prospects of earthly enjoyment, and paralyze the energies of the human mind. A storm at sea, or a failure of some hazardous speculation, may in a moment wreck the hopes and happiness of the hitherto highly favoured worshipper of this world's wealth. A more successful competitor may suddenly wrest from a defeated rival the wreath of glory which seemed to be almost within his eager grasp, and leave him a prey to the corroding anguish of disappointed hopes. The scientific or professional man may be arrested by the hand of disease in the full glow and vigour of ardent enterprise and arduous exertion, at the very moment when some important discovery, or the object of some professional ambition, for which he had long sighed and struggled, seemed just about to reward him for years of patient research and persevering toil. The voluptuary *may* in a moment have the draught of intoxicating sensuality dashed from his lips; and *must*, sooner or later, be taught the bitter truth, that the dregs of the cup of poisoned pleasure are wormwood and gall. And even the most estimable and amia-

ble of the children of the world, whose comparatively purified heart is capable of relishing, and most intensely enjoys, that "only bliss of paradise which has survived the fall," domestic happiness—even he knows not the moment when all his domestic enjoyments may, by the ruthless hand of death, be cut down and swept away—for ever! But oh! the security, the triumph of the Christian's happiness! Oh! the indestructible perpetuity of the pleasures which flow from a Saviour's service and a Saviour's smile! No casualties can interrupt the believer's blessedness, safe in the hands, and derived from the favour, of his covenant God. No storm can wreck *his* hopes—no rival wrest from *him* the crown of rejoicing, which a Redeemer's hand has wreathed around his brow! *He* cannot be arrested in his career of hallowed enjoyment by any providential appointment of the God at whose disposal are all the events of his life, and who has promised to make them all work together for his present and eternal good! Sickness cannot suspend his intercourse with his heavenly Friend, and therefore cannot dry up the source of his highest happiness. Yea, so far from this, that often he will receive the tenderest visits from that Friend, "who sticketh closer than a brother," and will enjoy the sweetest communion of heart with him, when stretched upon the bed of languishing and pain. Sorrow cannot cloud the sunshine of his joy, for through its darkest gloom his beloved Saviour's smile will still be seen, brightening even sorrow itself into but a soberer tint of sanctified enjoyment, and revealing that Saviour to his soul under the most endearing character, the sympathizing Comforter of his afflicted people. Yes, I repeat it, *this* is emphatically the triumph of the Christian's happiness. It is safe in God's own hands—perfectly safe, beyond the reach of all the changes and cala-

mities of this mortal miserable world. For, as one of the chief sources of the believer's blessedness consists in the grateful joy which he derives from glorifying the God of his salvation, no possible circumstances in which he can ever be placed can prevent *this* source of heaven-derived felicity from pouring abroad its pure and gladdening tide of holy happiness into his heart, as he can never be placed in circumstances in which he will not be able to glorify his God. Yea, there is one peculiar feature of the case which, though already glanced at, must not be left without more distinct observation, so triumphantly does it establish the superiority of the Christian's happiness. It is, that even the very circumstances which entirely blight the worldling's enjoyments, only serve to deepen and endear the Christian's; for it is on the bed of sickness, in the season of affliction, and in the prospect of death, that he has the most precious opportunities of glorifying the Saviour, who has bought him with his own blood, and therefore enjoys the largest measure of that exalted happiness which flows into his heart from *this*, the purest source of felicity that even a believer can enjoy.

What a dignity also does this devotedness to God's service throw around every member of the body, and every faculty of the soul, and thus render them all channels through which the purest pleasure may flow into the believer's breast! How is the heart dignified by being made the throne where God reigns—and the understanding, by being made the palace where the King of kings resides—and the memory, by being made the storehouse where all the loving-kindnesses of a gracious God are treasured up—and the imagination, by being made a chariot of fire to convey the spirit up to heaven, and give it a glimpse of all the glories there—and the mind, by being made a laboratory for the contrivance

of plans destined to advance the Redeemer's kingdom upon earth! And how is the body dignified by being made the temple of the Holy Ghost, and all its members by being made instruments of righteousness, consecrated to the service of the blessed God!—the eyes, by being made the inlets through which the glories of his power, as displayed in creation, and the riches of his grace, as revealed in his word, are conveyed to the soul, and kindle devout love and adoration there—and the ears, by being made a channel for receiving the sweet sounds of his message of redeeming love—and the tongue, by being made a pleader in his cause, a chanter of his praise—and the hands, by being engaged in deeds of divine benevolence, and offices of Christian charity—and the feet, by being engaged on errands of mercy, enabling the humble believer to copy the example of his Divine Master, and like him, to go about doing good! How does the service of God thus exalt the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, and render all alike instrumental in promoting the glory of God in the highest, and on earth, the happiness of man!

Nor should it be overlooked, in estimating the happiness derived from the consecration of all our talents to the service of God, that it exalts and hallows the most comparatively trivial circumstances into sources of pure and sweet enjoyment, by making them the means of embodying the Christian's gratitude, and promoting the Redeemer's glory. There is not a duty he can be called on to discharge, at home or abroad, however in itself uninteresting, or even irksome, which is not by this means invested with interest and attractiveness. The feeling that by its faithful discharge, in such a spirit as will tend to adorn the doctrines of God his Saviour, he can at once express his grateful love towards the God of his salvation, and glorify him in the eyes of all

around, imparts to the most toilsome exertions, which would otherwise be felt to be the most wearying drudgery, a pleasurable character, which only a believer's heart can understand. *Whatever* is done for Christ's sake, and with a view to his glory, be it what it may in itself, *must* give pleasure to a heart where his love is enthroned in its rightful supremacy. This is the principle which indeed possesses a divine alchymy, and can turn whatever it touches into gold. A passing conversation, of which Christ is the precious theme, is thus elevated to the rank of a tribute of thanksgiving to a beloved Redeemer's praise; while the hope that it may be made instrumental in advancing his glory, renders it the source of more true happiness to the believer's heart than the most brilliant display of conversational talent not thus hallowed could ever afford. And when we consider how heartless, aimless, and profitless is for the most part the conversation of the children of the world—how often it seems to be a weary dragging on of one uninteresting topic after another, without a gleaming of intellect, or a glow of feeling, to enlighten or enliven it, surely we must acknowledge in this, as in every other department, the unquestionable superiority, as to the power of conferring real enjoyment, which Christianity possesses, by rendering conversation a vehicle for the conveyance from one Christian heart to another, of those hallowed sentiments and emotions by which they may both be gladdened, purified, and comforted; as well as an instrument for advancing the Saviour's glory, and the spiritual welfare of those who are as yet strangers to his preciousness, by pleading his cause affectionately and faithfully, with their understandings and their hearts. For can it reasonably be doubted that conversation must be a source of higher enjoyment when it is thus employed as a means of promoting the noblest of all objects, the

glory of God in the salvation of man, than when it is employed merely as a method of killing so much time by the utterance of a certain quantity of sound, expended on subjects by which neither the understanding nor the heart can possibly be for a single moment interested or improved? And what is thus true of conversation, is equally true of every other mode of spending time—that, by devotion to a beloved Saviour's service, they are all redeemed from their own native insignificance or irksomeness, and invested with a high and holy character of importance and attractiveness. And whether it be a letter, or a visit of Christian kindness to a friend, or one of Christian charity to the cottage of the poor—whether it be the instruction of a child or a servant at home, or a class at a Sabbath-school—whether it be the regulation of the domestic or the social circle—or the employment of the mind, or of the pen, in schemes for the advancement of human happiness, by the diffusion of the blessings of a Saviour's name, through the instrumentality of those societies which are labouring in his cause—whatever, in fact, may be the manner in which time and talents are engaged in his service, that one thought, which the believer so delights to cherish, and which is the animating motive of all his labours of love, “I am working for Him who loved me with a love stronger than death, even the death of the cross—for Him to whose love I am indebted for all the happiness I have in time, or hope for through eternity”—that thought, I say, must impart to every exertion which gratitude may prompt in his dear Redeemer's cause, no matter of what nature the office in itself may be, a dignity in the believer's eyes, and a sweetness to his soul, for which he would deem the most exalted honours which an earthly monarch could confer, and the sweetest pleasures which an

earthly paradise could afford, a miserably poor exchange!

Having thus endeavoured to establish the claims of the Gospel to the title of the patroness of true happiness, on the ground of its providing the only sphere of *service* that can suitably and satisfactorily engage the exalted capacities of the human soul, I would now desire to rest its claims on another basis, namely, that it supplies the only *hopes* that can fully satisfy the unbounded aspirations of that soul.

So long as the objects of hope are of the earth, as to their origin, and bounded by time, as to their duration, it is utterly impossible, from the very constitution of the soul of man, that they can fill and satisfy desires which were destined to find their adequate enjoyment only in the fruition of God, the bliss of heaven, the joys of immortality. We may apply to this view of our subject the all-important question of our blessed Lord, and ask, in reference to the realization of happiness, as resulting from the fulfilment of the very highest earthly hopes, which even the imagination itself could grasp, "What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world?" Even without adverting at present to the tremendous alternative to which our Lord alludes, the loss of the soul for eternity, which is, by a fearful emphasis, the loss of all that can make life a blessing, or prevent immortality from being a curse, confining our view now to the insufficiency of all that this world contains to administer full satisfaction to the human soul, we would feel warranted in asking, even for the attainment of present happiness, such as would completely satisfy all his desires and realize all his hopes, "What shall it profit a man, if he could gain the whole world?" Could he thereby gain what his soul was in search of—satisfying happiness? Would the possessor of the whole world, if the possession were unhallowed by its Creator's

smile, be, in the true sense of the word, a happy man? Would his heart, if the love of God were not enthroned there, be the abode of pure and perfect felicity? Undoubtedly not! We do not fear to assert that the possession of the whole world, if unsanctified and unsweetened by its Maker's smile, would leave in its possessor's heart an aching void, which nothing short of God himself could ever fill. Yes, let the treasures of the whole world be lavished at his feet—let every sense be gratified to the very uttermost—let earthly pleasure, in every varied form, flow in on his soul through unnumbered channels—let the loftiest ambition to which he could aspire for earthly glory be fully gratified—still, still we repeat our assertion, that happiness—true, substantial, satisfying happiness—would be a stranger in his heart,—that he would still feel craving desires for something nobler, something more intrinsically precious, something more commensurate to his capacities for enjoyment, than all the wealth, and all the pleasures, and all the power of the whole world could supply. He would still be longing for an object on which his heart could rest with full complacency, and his hopes with full contentment, and that object is exclusively the blessed God. And till *his* smile poured the sunshine of heaven's happiness into his heart, and *his* voice breathed the perfect peace of heaven into his soul, that man, while encompassed with all the splendours and luxuries that the world's wealth could procure, and flattered by the applauding voices of all the monarchs of the earth, kneeling in prostrate subjection at his feet, would feel, in the unsatisfied void that still remained unfilled in his heart, how true is the apostrophe of the poet of Christianity:

“Oh! thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art, of all thy gifts, thyself the crown!
Give what *thou canst*—*without thee we are poor*,
And with thee rich—take what thou wilt away!”

Here, then, we see what a powerful claim the religion of the Gospel possesses to be considered as the patroness of the highest happiness of which our nature is capable—because it supplies the only object of hope which can fully satisfy the aspirations of that passion which exercises such a paramount influence on the happiness of mankind. Is it not hope which, almost, I might say, from infancy to old age, is the great incentive to human exertion—the great spring of human enjoyment? Is not man prompted, by the very constitution of his nature, to be continually looking forward to some bright scene in the perspective of the future, which will, when realized, afford him that full and satisfying happiness for which he so ardently pants, and which, in all the varied pursuits and pleasure of the past, he has hitherto sought in vain? The school-boy anticipates with eager desire the period when he shall be released from the trammels of school-discipline, and embark, in all the pride of independence, on his college career. The collegian looks forward as eagerly to the time when he shall enter upon some professional path to wealth and honour, and surround himself with all the domestic enjoyments of a home of his own. The professional man, weighed down with the laborious occupations and anxieties by which he is continually burdened, looks forward longingly to a period of repose, when, with a competence secured for his family, he shall be enabled to enjoy a season of refreshing rest, both for his soul and body, before he has closed his pilgrimage here below.

Thus, from the cradle to the grave, man is at once buoyed up and beguiled—duped, yet delighted by the visions of hope. Happiness, still the object of his pursuit, seems still to fly before him, appearing always to be linked with some future plan or distant object, whose accomplishment hope fondly whispers in his ear will at last secure to him the satisfaction

of which he is in search; and though still disappointed, he still clings to the delusive hope that the next experiment will be more successful than all the past; because he feels instinctively that if he once bid farewell to hope, and resign himself to the dominion of despair, in that moment he must bid farewell to happiness for ever—a funeral pall will thenceforward seem spread over the face of creation. A midnight gloom will immediately settle upon every scene. Life will be felt to be an intolerable load, and the world one wide sepulchre, where death reigns in dark and dreary desolation all around. What indeed is the most appalling conception that we can form of hell itself, but that it is a world where hope never comes, but all is wrapt in the blackness of the darkness of despair? If, then, hope be thus essential to human happiness—if its visions be those to which the human heart instinctively turns, looking to them for compensation and comfort for past disappointments, and still listening, with credulous and delighted ear, to the flatterer's syren voice, then surely we may legitimately contend that the gospel promotes true happiness, since it provides so *effectually* for the satisfying of this master passion of the soul, by supplying *a hope* which never disappoints, never deceives, never maketh its votary ashamed, but more than meets his fondest desires, his most exalted anticipations—yea, immeasurably transcends them all! For what is the Christian's hope? A hope that, in right of his union by a living faith with God's well-beloved Son, he shall, as a joint heir with him, be possessed of an inheritance of blessedness and glory, “in incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” of which he shall be put in full possession in the day of Christ's glorious appearing; and whose preciousness (however incapable the believer, while on earth, must be adequately to apprehend its infinite value) may at least

be in some measure conceived from the consideration that it has been purchased at no less a price than the blood of Him who "in the beginning was with God, and was God," and must therefore be—oh, how can human language attempt to describe, or human imagination to conceive *what it must be* to be worthy of *such a price*!

This is the Christian's hope! Even that while the endless ages of eternity are rolling onward, beholding his beloved Saviour face to face, he shall be still progressing along the line of infinite blessedness flowing from his presence and his smile—continually ascending to greater and still greater heights of happiness—continually passing on from one degree of glory to another—perpetually advancing in assimilation to the divine character, as its divine beauties are more fully developed to his adoring gaze, and in veneration and love to the divine Source of his felicity, the triune God of his salvation, as fresh manifestations of his loving-kindness are vouchsafed, and he is enabled more intimately to enter into the mysteries of God's providential government and covenant of grace, and thus to hold closer and sweeter communion with the mind of God! *This, this* is the crown and climax of the Christian's hope!—the hope that throughout eternity he shall be as happy as it is in the power of an almighty God to make him! Yes, enjoy a happiness that will satisfy the Son of God, as an adequate recompense, *even in his* sight, for *all* he suffered on behalf of those for whom he endured the cross, despising its shame. Reflect what must *such* happiness be!—and, as the hope of future bliss, if a sure hope, yields the sweetest present enjoyment, remember what happiness *such a* hope, unfolding such prospects for *eternity* must supply! And then combine with this some of its subordinate sources of enjoyment—such as a glorified body made like unto the Redeemer's glorious

body, and the prospect of sharing throughout eternity the society of angels and archangels, and all the company of the redeemed, and of being reunited for ever to those he has here loved in Christ—combine all this; compare it, when combined, with the brightest earthly hopes that ever dazzled and disappointed the most devoted worshippers of this world; and *then say*, does not Christianity tend to promote the happiness of the human soul immeasurably beyond what this false and fallacious world can do, by unfolding before the view, as the sure and certain inheritance of all her faithful votaries, the glories and the blessedness of *such a hope as this?*

Christian, behold thy hope! And is there that earthly sorrow that can depress or darken thy spirit, when supported and brightened by *such a hope?* Think, too, *what should be thy gratitude to Him* who has purchased it for thee with his own most precious blood!

CHAPTER V.

THE ANTIDOTE TO ANXIETY.

THE third ground on which I would establish the proposition, that the Gospel is promotive of true happiness, is that it supplies the only effectual antidote to all those apprehensions and anxieties which poison the springs of human enjoyment.

To endeavour to enumerate, or even to classify, the diversified evils to which the children of men are exposed, and the fear of which must inevitably haunt those who are looking for their happiness to this world, and thus imbitter all their enjoyments, would be indeed a hopeless task; since there is not

an object on which the votary of this world can fix his affections, which may not in a moment be converted, by some sudden calamity, from a source of the purest felicity which earthly objects can supply, into a spring of the bitterest anguish which the human heart can feel. With the hope, however, to give some measure of distinctness to the consideration of this subject, I would observe, that we may divide those apprehensions, which so perpetually harass the mind and cloud the enjoyments of the children of the world, under two general heads—first, the fear of those desolating afflictions, by which all earthly happiness may be suddenly destroyed; and secondly, the fear of death, and what is to follow after death.

As to the first—The fear of desolating afflictions, which no prudence can prevent, has always been one of the chief imbuterers of the cup of earthly happiness. The feeling of insecurity, in spite of every effort to exclude it, will often intrude, as an unwelcome visiter on the idolater of earthly objects in the hour of enjoyment; and, glaring on his troubled spirit, as with a spectral glance, disturb his repose and mar his mirth. He cannot always succeed in shaking off the terrifying conviction, that some of those overwhelming visitations, from which he cannot, by any conceivable precaution or policy, screen himself, may suddenly sweep, like the blighting blast of the simoom, over all his joys, and leave his heart a desert indeed. He is often forced to remember, that let the gourd of earthly bliss, under whose shadow he so delights to repose, be ever so flourishing, a worm may come in an unlooked-for hour, and, in a moment, wither that gourd. Take the most favourable representation of earthly happiness which even fancy itself can sketch. Let the fond heart have treasured up his affection in a happy home, where the spirit of domestic love has breathed

its sweet influences into every bosom, and all the members are linked together in the closest and tenderest ties. Surely, you may say, if happiness is to be found on earth, it will be found in the bosom of such a home as this! Yes! most surely, if the love of God be there, and if a Saviour's smile shed its halo round all the domestic enjoyments of a *happy, because a hallowed, home.* But if this be not the case, ah! where is the security for its happiness? Alas! on what a sandy foundation is the fabric built! Visit that home to-day. A smile is sparkling on every countenance! The voice of gladness is echoing through every room! You feel as if you were encompassed with an atmosphere of sunshine, which has shed its brightening beams on all around. Return a week—perchance a day. Why is all silent in that home of happy hearts? What means the gloom that gathers on every face, and seems to spread a darkening cloud over every scene? Ah! do you not *feel*, that the angel of death has crossed the threshold of that house? Does not an instinctive shuddering tell you, that the destroyer of earthly happiness has been there? Yes! the shadow of death has fallen upon it! The sunshine that once gladdened it has been shrouded in its gloom! And in the voices of lamentation, and mourning, and wo, that are around you, you may learn the truth of the touching declaration of the poet, that, if men desire to secure at once *satisfying* and *abiding* happiness—

“Too low they build, who build below the skies.”

But, independently of the destruction of domestic happiness by the drying up of its fountain-head, oh! to how many distracting anxieties must the heart which has treasured up in a comparatively happy, but not hallowed, home, its all of earthly hope and joy, incessantly be a prey! How must it be haunt-

ed by the fear of the chilling blight of poverty, or the wasting breath of lingering sickness, or the disappointment of cherished hopes, connected with the development of the character, or the determination of the destiny, of its beloved members, as they advance beyond the period of childhood into the temptations and trials of riper years! In proportion to the intensity of its love for objects round which its affections are entwined, must be the agitating anxieties of such a heart, if it has not learned to repose them, with what has been happily called a "faithful carelessness," on the bosom of a Saviour's love. Who can tell what a fond heart must suffer, in a world like this, on behalf of those to whom it clings for happiness, if it has to bear the burden of its crushing apprehensions in the unaided strength of its own weakness, unsupported and unsoothed by the promises and consolations of a covenant God? And even where the tenderer affections do not invest such anxieties with what we may call a more disinterested and generous character, where self is the object of exclusive solicitude, what perpetual alarms must the most thoroughly selfish bosom feel! What pursuit can the most devoted worshipper of self engage in, so secure of success, that he must not tremble with apprehension, lest, after all his exertions, he may be baffled by some unexpected contingency, and see all his darling hopes lie withered in the dust? He knows that, in the competition for the prizes that this world holds out, "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." He knows, that some untoward event, which he can neither foresee nor hinder, may cross him in his path, and frustrate all his schemes. How can he ward off the stroke of disease, the fickleness of friends, the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely? Or how prevent these from exercising a most disastrous influence on his worldly career?

Well, well may it be said, that the heart tossed by such agitating apprehensions, is like the troubled sea, that cannot rest; and surely, if there *be* a principle that has power to calm these agitations—if there be a spirit which can say, with a voice of authority, to this troubled sea, “Peace—be still!”—that spirit must be a ministering spirit of peace and joy to the children of men!

Such a principle, I contend, the Gospel supplies. Such a spirit breathes in every page of that revelation of redeeming love. It is not that the Christian is a stoic, and thus shielded from these anxieties and apprehensions by the callous insensibility of an apathetic heart. Nor is it that he has any warrant of special security from the assaults of these afflictive dispensations—any promised privilege of exemption from the thousand ills that flesh is heir to. No! so far from this, Christianity increases the strength of his affections, and the tenderness of his solicitudes, for the objects on whom his heart has centred its earthly love; and the express promise of his Divine Master to him is, “In the world you shall have tribulation,” while the experience of the children of God in every age has been, that “Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.” So that, instead of exemption from the various afflictions which abound in this vale of tears, they are rather taught to expect a larger measure, as the portion that will be allotted to them, by their Heavenly Father’s hand. How then is it, that the Gospel supplies the effectual antidote of which I have spoken, to all those anxieties and apprehensions which poison the very springs of human happiness? How? By the assurance which breathes the very peace of heaven into the believer’s soul, that the arrangement of every event of his life, in which his welfare and happiness, for time and for eternity, are concerned, is in the hands of the God of his salvation—that in-

finite wisdom, power, and love are all employed in that arrangement, and pledged to conduct it to a prosperous issue—that he is therefore warranted to believe all is safe, as to his real interests, temporal and eternal, and can *never* be endangered, *until* infinite wisdom can be mistaken, infinite power defeated, and infinite love exhausted; or, in other words, until God ceases to be God! Oh! how secure must be the happiness which is exposed to the danger of destruction or decay from no conceivable casualty *except this!*

And as the Christian is thus entitled to look on his eventual and eternal happiness as inviolably secure, equally is he entitled to expect with cheerful confidence, that in carrying on His scheme of unchangeable and unerring love, to its full accomplishment, his Heavenly Father will employ both the wisest and tenderest means; never withholding a single temporal blessing which would be really promotive of his everlasting welfare, and never appointing a single affliction which was not indispensably required, and will not infallibly work, for his eternal good.

Thus does the Christian feel privileged to anticipate the very largest measure of earthly enjoyment, and the very least measure of earthly trial, which are compatible with the advancement of his everlasting happiness. And as the meting out of the measure, in both cases, is in the hands of the only wise God, his Saviour, how can he consistently feel a shadow of uneasiness, or wrong *such* love as *His* by a shadow of suspicion, lest there should be in his allotted portion, one particle more of earthly sorrow, or one particle less of earthly joy, than infallible wisdom knows to be necessary for the full accomplishment of the purposes of everlasting love!

Here, then, the mystery of the Christian's unruffled cheerfulness, amidst all the calamities by which

he is encompassed or threatened, is satisfactorily explained! Here is the secret of that peace, which, amidst all the experienced or anticipated trials of life, he is privileged to possess! He has contemplated with the eye of faith, on Calvary's cross, a love which indeed passeth all knowledge; and being well assured that to *that love* is intrusted the apportioning of his daily measure of earthly good or evil, as they are called, he feels fully satisfied with the allotted measure of each.

He has penetrated the depths of that wonderful question of the Apostle,—“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how *shall He not* with Him also freely give us all things?” He feels that the utter impossibility, there implied, of any really good thing being withheld from him by his God and Father, since He withheld not from him His own, His only Son, but delivered *Him* up for his sake to the death of the cross, affords the most triumphant motive for cheerful expectation of every real earthly good, and cheerful submission to every appointed earthly tribulation, since He is privileged to look on both as equally the gifts of such a Father's love.

The Christian's cheerfulness is not then derived from the delusive expectation, that his voyage through life will be uniformly tranquil, over a sea always unruffled by a storm; but from the scripturally warranted confidence, that not a storm shall ever rise, but by his beloved Saviour's permission; and that whether the sea be tranquil or tempestuous, that Saviour will guide him alike, in calm or storm, to the sheltering haven of eternal rest. He does not expect to tread a path of unclouded sunshine, strewed at every step with flowers, in his pilgrimage through this wilderness-world to the Canaan above; but he knows assuredly, (and this is enough to keep his soul in perfect peace,) that not a cloud

will ever darken his pathway, nor a thorn ever pierce his feet, unless by the appointment of his own Redeemer's love,—and he feels the full force of a most cheering and consolatory reflection, which I once heard from a distinguished and devoted servant of God, “that the Redeemer is infinitely raised above all temptation unnecessarily to afflict His people.”

Thus it is that the believer is kept in perfect peace, by that God on whom his mind is stayed—because he trusteth in Him. Thus it is, that “his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord,” and that *therefore* he “feareth no evil tidings;” for what possible event can be the messenger of evil tidings to him who has the plighted promise of a faithful God, that He will make *all* things work together for his good? How then can *he* fear what will come in the unknown future, who knows that *nothing but what is good can* come to him from the hand of his Saviour and his God?

It is the abiding recollection of this most comforting assurance, brought home to the heart with power by the Holy Spirit, which so effectually tranquillizes the Christian's breast in the anticipation of the future history of his life, and preserves him from those tormenting anxieties and alarms, which continually harass and distract the worldling's mind. Nor is it merely the conviction, that unnecessary trials will not be appointed for him by that tender Father, who has already lavished on him such amazing proofs of His boundless love, which thus shields him from the assaults of distracting disquietude; but also the sweet conviction, that if trials should be appointed, as being required for the advancement of his spiritual welfare, they will come to Him as messengers of mercy, to fulfil the gracious purposes of his Heavenly Father's love. He knows, that if they come, they will be accompanied by such supplies of supporting strength, and

gladdening consolation, as will constrain him to reckon them among the choicest mercies he has ever received from the God of all his blessings. He feels assured, that if that God does allure him into the wilderness, it will be for the purpose of *there* speaking comfortably unto him—that if he does banish him from the society and enjoyments of the world, He will make his solitude a Patmos to his soul. He remembers that the school of sanctified affliction is that in which the children of God, in every age, have learned the sweetest and most precious lessons of a Saviour's faithfulness, sympathy, and love—have acquired the most matured meetness for their heavenly inheritance—have been moulded into the closest conformity to their Divine Master's image—have enjoyed the most endearing communion with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter—and have found the most abundant opportunities for promoting the Redeemer's glory, by the exhibition (which so powerfully recommends His Gospel) of the peace, and joy, and consolation, which He imparts to His people in their day of trial. Now, surely, when the Christian reflects on all this, he cannot shrink with shuddering alarm, from becoming a scholar in Christ's school of sanctified sorrow; but may confidently leave it with cheerful composure, in the hands of that beloved Saviour, to appoint what lessons he is to learn, and what station is to be assigned to him, in that heavenly school!

Now, when we combine these two considerations—that the Christian knows assuredly that he will not be afflicted by his Heavenly Father, in any one particular, unless so far as there is a gracious “need be” for the affliction; and, further, that, *if* from *this* cause it *be* appointed, it will come with such a message of love on its lips, and such a crowd of blessings in its train, as will compel him with a grateful heart, to exclaim, “It is good for me that

I have been afflicted,"—we must confess that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ does indeed supply an effectual antidote to all those distracting anxieties and disquieting alarms, which disturb the peace and imbipter the enjoyments of the children of the world, and is, on this ground, justly entitled to be regarded as the patroness of the true happiness of mankind.

Nor is it less friendly to that happiness, by allaying the feverishness of inordinate desire for earthly good, than by calming the disquietude of tormenting fear of earthly ill. And this it effects by the same assurance, that the disposal of *each* is in a wise and loving Father's hands. Thus, if a child of God is led to wish for the attainment of any object, the success of any scheme, as calculated to be conducive in his estimation, to the advancement of his real happiness, for time and for eternity, he is privileged to feel satisfied—that *if* he is correct in his estimation, the object of his desire will assuredly be granted to him—and only denied if his Heavenly Father, in His infinite wisdom, know that denial to be needful for the promotion of the *everlasting* welfare of His beloved child, whom He loves too tenderly to injure him by bestowing what He sees would prove to him not a blessing, but a bane.

This one reflection checks, with the child of God, all tormenting solicitude in the pursuit of any fancied earthly good, and all repining discontent, if disappointed in his fondly-cherished hope. When he says to himself, "I am *quite sure* that my Heavenly Father would have given it to me, if it would really have been for my good, seeing that He withheld not from me His Son—His own and only Son!—must not *this* at once silence the rising murmurs of complaint, even if his darling hope of earthly happiness be withered in the dust? Nor let it be thought, that this view will paralyze the energy of

exertion, in pursuit of any apparently desirable object of earthly good. No; so far from this, it will inspire every exertion with increased energy from the assurance of success, *if* success would be really a blessing to his soul. Knowing that his God is a God of means, he will embark in the undertaking (once he has ascertained that, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, it is suitable to his character, as a faithful follower of the Lamb) with the most cheerful alacrity, resolved to use only those means for the attainment of his object, which he can consistently entreat his God to bless. And thus he will feel fully warranted to conclude, that, if it will be really for his own good, and the glory of his God, his exertions will most assuredly be crowned with success; and that disappointment will only be the result, *if* the object be one, which, however specious in appearance, would really prove injurious to his soul, and which, therefore, his Heavenly Father loves him too well to grant. Oh! what a delightful tendency has this thought to shed over the believer's spirit that holy calm—that abiding peace of God—which is neither ruffled by distracting fear, nor feverish desire; but, like an infant slumbering in fearless security on its mother's breast, reposes with a tranquillizing trust on the bosom of a Saviour's love!

This conviction will also free him from all uneasy apprehensions, lest any of what the world calls accidents, or casualties, should thwart his schemes, or disappoint his hopes.

Firmly believing that nothing happens by chance in the providential government of God, but that all events are ordered by His infallible wisdom, and that all hearts are in His hands, he feels assured, that no possible contingency can arise to frustrate his plans, or prevent him from attaining the object of his wishes, *if* his covenant God sees it to be for

his good, and is determined to accomplish it for him, by crowning his efforts with success. He knows that no human or infernal policy or power, can baffle Jehovah's wisdom, or defeat *His* omnipotence; and, therefore, he fears no disappointment from *any* source but *that one*, which will reconcile him to disappointment of his dearest hopes—even the love of the God of his salvation. He has used that precious recipe prescribed by the Heavenly Physician, as a cure for carefulness (Phil. iv. 6, 7,) and has experienced its sovereign efficacy in keeping his mind in perfect peace. This thought also restrains him from the use of any unwarrantable means for the accomplishment of his object, and thus saves him from all the misery which the use of such means must necessarily involve. He knows they cannot be required any more than sanctioned by his God; for that he could, in one moment, by a single suggestion whispered to the heart, bias in his favour the most determined opponent of his wishes, and thus remove what appeared the most insuperable obstacles to his success. He thus goes on calmly and cheerfully in the use of all legitimate means, striving to attain what his heart, in a spirit of submissiveness to the divine will desires, with a sweet confidence of ultimate triumph over every difficulty, and of a full realization of all his wishes, *if* the love which bled and died for him on Calvary can consent to the grant; and if that love withhold it, oh! can he for one moment be so wayward as to wish what *it* withholds, or so ungrateful as to complain at what *it* appoints?

There is another point of view in which the religion of the Gospel tends to the promotion of human happiness, in connexion with the freedom from tormenting anxiety about earthly joy or sorrow, to which we have been adverting. And that is, that it moderates the believer's solicitude on the subject,

by reducing all earthly objects and events to their proper level in his estimation, and assigning to them a subordinate station in his affections; and thus preserves him from that distracting apprehension, on their behalf, to which the idolaters of earthly enjoyments are necessarily exposed. The man whose supreme, whose entire happiness is concentrated on the things of earth, cannot escape from the harrowing fear, which bringeth torment, that in a moment he may be deprived of the objects to which he clings with such a desperate tenacity, and with them lose all the happiness which his heart desires. Often will this harrowing fear pass like a withering blight over his spirit, a deep and chilling gloom, while all around him seems lit up with the sunshine of gladness. But *such* a fear can never darken the spirit, or imbitter the enjoyments of a child of God. No! no! His heart has been, by the grace of God, effectually cured of the idolatrous love of earthly objects, however deservedly dear. In the heart where Jesus reigns without a rival, enthroned there in His rightful supremacy, no idol can be allowed, set up and worshipped; and therefore the agony of apprehension, lest that idol be destroyed, (which is the penalty that the idolater *must* pay for his inordinate love of the creature whom he has permitted to usurp in his heart the Creator's prerogative and place,) this agony (and, oh, it is indeed the poisoner of the sweetest cup of earthly enjoyment!) is one which the consistent Christian never can endure. *His* supreme happiness, he feels assured, is inviolably safe. It is in the keeping of Almighty God: therefore no earthly chance or change can intercept its course, or prevent it from flowing down into his soul from its inexhaustible fountain above. All his earthly hopes may wither and decay—all his earthly friends may forsake him from fickleness, or be torn from him by death—riches may flee away, and strength

may fail—every source of earthly enjoyment may be dried up—and sorrow and suffering, in every variety of form, beset his path;—still, amidst this desolation of all his earthly hopes and happiness, the child of God can look up with a cheerful smile from the wilderness of this world to the heaven where his God and Saviour dwells, and where he hopes ere long to dwell with him for ever; and with a joyful, yea, with a thankful heart, take up the language of the prophet, (Habak. iii. 17, 18,) and say, “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines—the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat—the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; *yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation!*”

Yes, God is a satisfying, an all-sufficient portion for his people! Earthly cisterns may all be broken, but in Him the believer finds a fountain of living waters, ever full and ever flowing, from which he can at all times drink those refreshing draughts of pure felicity, by which his otherwise unquenchable thirst for happiness will be abundantly satisfied.

It is this conviction which keeps the Christian’s mind in such sweet tranquillity, amidst all the alternations of earthly prosperity and adversity; and enables him to enjoy the former and endure the latter with a sober equanimity, which adds immeasurably to the enjoyment of the one, and takes almost all its bitterness from the other. He feels that since his supreme happiness is safe, he need not be distracted with anxiety about that which flows from any subordinate source. He feels that he can never be made a bankrupt where his heart’s chief treasures are laid up. His heart being no longer set on earth as the resting-place of his affections, but habituated to look on heaven as its home, he is enabled to regard the various scenes through which he is passing, with the eye of a traveller who is journey-

ing to a happy home. And never are the comforts of life enjoyed with a sweeter relish, than when they are thus regarded by a Christian as the accommodations of his heavenward journey, mercifully provided for him by his Heavenly Father's loving-kindness and care. And never do the sorrows of life press less heavily on the spirit, than when the Christian pilgrim most fully feels that he is but a traveller here below—that his heart, as well as his home, is in heaven—and that he should even welcome the storms, however rough may be their blast, which serve additionally to endear to his thoughts and his affections the hoped-for happiness of that heavenly home.

Surely, then, if these things be so—if the believer is thus privileged to feel secure, that the very largest measure of earthly happiness, and the very least measure of earthly affliction, seen by infinite wisdom to be most conducive to his everlasting welfare, will be meted out for him by his covenant-God; and if, by being preserved from the agony inseparable from all idolatrous attachment to earthly objects, and possessed of the sweet assurance that his chief happiness (that which has God in Christ for its source, heaven for its home, and eternity for its duration) is inviolably safe, he is enabled to look, without feverish desire or fretful alarm, on the alternations of earthly joy or grief that may be appointed for him, and thus to receive the one with cheerful contentment, and the other with as cheerful resignation, and both with equal thankfulness, as both are equally the tokens of a Father's love—surely we have redeemed our pledge, and are warranted in asserting that the Gospel is promotive of true happiness, on the ground of supplying an effectual antidote to the anxieties and apprehensions which, with the children of the world, poison the springs of all earthly enjoyment.

I cannot close this chapter without briefly advert-
ing to the deep debt of gratitude which the Chris-
tian owes to the Holy Spirit, in connexion with the
subject that the chapter brings before our view.

It is this Blessed Spirit who, in the discharge of
His gracious office of the Comforter, gives such
sweet and soothing influence to the motives for
cheerful trust and acquiescence in God's fatherly
love and appointments, which we have been engaged
in considering. It is this Blessed Spirit who im-
parts to the believer's soul such a grateful sense of the
Father's love in the gift of His dear Son, as en-
ables it to repose, with unquestioning confidence
and contentment, in the wisdom, faithfulness, and
tenderness of that love.

It is this Divine Comforter who breathes His
own dove-like Spirit of serenity and peace into the
believer's breast, and makes every precious promise
of the Gospel so redolent of holy joy to the thank-
ful Christian's heart. Whatever comfort has ever
flowed into his soul through the sacred channel of
the divine ordinances, whether, when engaged in
public or private prayer, in studying God's holy
word, or attending the Sabbath services and sacra-
mental table—whatever gladness, emanating from
the light of God's countenance, has gilt the gloom of
his sorrow in the hour of silent meditation, in the
retirement of his closet, or social converse with
Christian friends—for all, he is indebted to the love,
and presence, and power of God the Holy Ghost.
Oh ! how gratefully, then, should he love, how con-
fidingly cleave to, this gentle gracious Comforter !
How jealously should he guard against grieving Him
by neglect, or provoking Him by the indulgence of
any tempers or practices which He abhors, to with-
draw the manifestations of His grace ! How tender-
ly should he cherish His every suggestion, and com-
ply with his every command, walking in all the

ways of His appointment, even those ways of holiness and filial obedience to the commands of God, on which this Blessed Spirit delights to shed the brightest illumination of His smile, and to cheer those that are following their Saviour's footsteps therein with the sweetest whisperings of His voice! And how much more abundantly would the Christian be enabled to repose, amidst the agitating scenes of life, in perfect peace—to "rejoice in tribulation"—and to glorify his God amidst the fires of affliction, if he more devoutly implored, more faithfully followed, and more tenderly cherished, the renewing, strengthening, and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit—the Divine and only effectual Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter of the children of God!

CHAPTER VI.

THE FEAR OF DEATH.

WE now come to speak of that most overwhelming anxiety, which more than any other imbibers the enjoyments of the worldling, the fear of death, and of what follows after death. Nor is there any particular in which the religion of the Gospel more triumphantly vindicates her claim to be regarded as the patroness of human happiness, than by dispelling this fear, and substituting in its place a calm composure, if not always an elevated joy, in the anticipation of death.

Let the worldling struggle as he may to banish altogether from his mind the subject of death, he cannot entirely succeed. There are times when it will force itself upon his consideration, in spite of all his efforts to drive it away. There are moments

when its voice *will* be heard, notwithstanding the desperate exertions he makes to silence it; and it is a voice which, however he may affect to brave its threatenings, will strike terror into his inmost soul. How often does the appalling thought, that he must die—and the more appalling apprehension of what may come after death—force themselves on his mind in the midst of his ungodly merriment, and fling their dark shadow over the brightest scenes of earthly bliss! To die—to appear before a holy God—to see a despised Saviour face to face—to launch into eternity—oh! these are awful considerations—and there are seasons when the most determined votary of the world cannot entirely shut them out, or prevent them from overwhelming his spirit with unutterable alarm. He may plunge into the vortex of dissipation—but even there a fearful whisper, that tells him he must die, and enter on a dark, unknown eternity, will often be heard with dreadful distinctness, amidst the loudest roar of wild intemperance and unhallowed mirth. He may seek for purer pleasures in the tranquil bosom of a happy home—but there too will the unwelcome thought intrude, and darken all his domestic happiness with the gloom of the shadow of death. He may travel from clime to clime, and endeavour, by ceaseless change of residence, and continual excitement in visiting new scenes, to get rid of the alarming intruder on his enjoyment—but in vain! Often will the thought flash across him, that he may flee from home, but cannot flee from death—that he may *forget*, but cannot *prevent*, its approach. And then there will come times, when death approaches him in such a form that he cannot refuse to look on him, and listen to his voice—however, like Felix, he may tremble before the messenger of God, as conscience reasons with him of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come. Death may visit his family,

and there seize upon the object that is most closely twined around his heart. Can he, while standing beside that beloved one's dying bed, or hanging over the lifeless form, or listening to the thrilling sound which announces the return of dust to dust—oh! can he *then* forget that he too must die—that an hour *must* come when friends will gather round *his* dying bed, and hang over *his* lifeless form, and stand beside *his* grave!—and can he, at such a moment, forbear to think, where will his soul, his undying soul, then be? Can he hope it will be with a God he has daringly insulted—with a Saviour he has contemptuously scorned—in a heaven he has contentedly resigned? If not—*where*—with *whom*—*in what* scenes—in what society will it be? Oh! what visions of the worm that dieth not—of the fire that is not quenched—of the accursed companionship of the devil and his angels—of being plunged into the blackness of darkness for ever—of being tormented through a wo-worn eternity with ever-gnawing remorse for having despised a Saviour's love—may harrow up his soul with such unseen agonies and terrors, as convince him, by a tremendous pre-intimation, a dreadful foretaste of hell, that it must be indeed “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!” He may succeed in partially allaying these terrors and agonies by delusive and destructive opiates, which Satan will gladly supply, that he may thus secure his wretched victim for eternity. He may whisper to his soul that God is merciful—that he will repent at a more convenient season—that he is not worse than thousands around him, and surely all these cannot be destined for everlasting destruction; but still he cannot, by all this sophistry, succeed in altogether banishing his fears. A secret dread still hangs over him. God is merciful, it is true; but he feels that he is abusing that mercy, and he cannot be certain, but that such un-

grateful abuse of such amazing mercy may wear out the patience even of a long-suffering God, and even afford a ground for deeper condemnation, as the just recompence of deeper guilt. All this must keep his mind in a state of uneasiness and alarm. To be compelled to brood over the remembrance of all his ingratitude to God—all his contempt of the Saviour's proffered grace—all the mercy he has spurned—all the happiness he has lost, and this for ever and ever! oh, into what an eternity will death usher his undying soul! He may for the present banish the subject of death from his thoughts, and thus strive to shut out the prospect of this eternity of unutterable wo; but another visitation in his family circle, or some threatening attack of illness to himself, will force it again on his reluctant spirit, and bring back with it all its attendant train of harrowing fears, and insupportable anguish.

How supremely wretched is the condition of that man, however prosperous his career in the world, however encompassed with the materials for earthly enjoyment, who is thus perpetually liable to have his happiness destroyed by an intruder whom all his vigilance cannot exclude, and whose sudden and unwelcome appearance may at any moment, like the hand-writing on the wall that terrified the impious monarch of old in the midst of his unhallowed feast, mar all the merriment of the ungodly reveller, and shake his inmost soul with convulsive fear! What misery to be continually endeavouring to forget what you at the same time feel that forgetfulness cannot avert!—To have an instinctive and shuddering consciousness continually haunting you, that all your enjoyments are at the mercy of one blighting recollection, which it requires the most desperate efforts to ward off; and which, with all those efforts, will ever and anon intrude itself, and force on the mind the appalling reflection, that the

enemy so dreaded is, with sure though silent step, advancing nearer every day, and that the most profound oblivion cannot for the space of one moment retard the arrival of this formidable foe, the ruthless destroyer of all earthly happiness and all earthly hopes! Now, just contrast with this the Christian's triumph over the fear of death. Behold him more than conqueror over this enemy of our peace, through that Saviour who loved him and gave Himself for him to death, even the death of the cross! Assured that his sins are blotted out in that Saviour's atoning blood, that his soul is clothed in that Saviour's justifying righteousness, and that the Everlasting Father loves him with unutterable love, for His dear Son's sake, what is there in death to terrify *his* spirit, or to mar *his* joys? *He* sees the monster disarmed of its sting by his Almighty Redeemer's death. So that he can take up, with humble confidence and holy joy, the triumphant exclamation,—“Oh! death, where is thy sting? Oh! grave, where is thy victory?” He does not shrink from the prospect of going down into the dark valley of the shadow of death, for he *knows* that his beloved Saviour will be with him there—that His everlasting arms will uphold his fainting spirit—His irradiating smile will gild the valley's gloom—and that through it, conducted safely by His guiding hand, his emancipated spirit will pass into the presence of the God of his salvation, to rejoice there with joy unspeakable and full of glory for ever and ever!

I do not mean to say, that it is always the privilege of the Christian thus to triumph, with such exulting confidence, over the fear of death. There may be times when faith is weak, and hope is clouded, and the aversion with which nature instinctively shrinks from dissolution may inspire a temporary terror even in a Christian's soul. And there are

times, too, when the prospect of parting from the beloved ones of earth must dart a thrill of acutest anguish even into a Christian's heart. But, after all this has been admitted, it is beyond all controversy, that the fear of death can never, unless mental, be combined with bodily disease, haunt the spirit of a consistent child of God with such distracting terrors as, in spite of all his efforts to banish the unwelcome thought, will often rush on the votary of the world when the prospect of death is forced on his reluctant view. And therefore I contend, that by entirely dispelling, or so mitigating this fear that it no longer hath torment, but is softened down into a chastened solicitude, which only constrains the Christian to cling more closely to his God for supporting strength to carry him safely, if not rejoicingly, through this dreaded hour, Christianity has achieved the most glorious triumph over the greatest enemy of human happiness, since, by revealing that all-sufficient atonement by which the sinner can be reconciled to his offended God, and death be made the gate-way to everlasting life, she has enabled her faithful followers to look on this once-dreaded foe as changed into a much-loved friend, whose summons, calling on them to depart from the sins and sorrows of earth to "be with Christ" amidst the fulness of joy in heaven, they are prepared, with cheerful if not exulting complaisance, to obey. And nothing assuredly can more directly tend to enable any individual to enjoy, with the sweetest relish, every purified pleasure that earth affords, than to be able to anticipate, with cheerful hope, the summons of death as a welcome messenger from a beloved Saviour, commissioned to deliver His dear servant from the sorrows of mortality, that so his unshackled spirit may enter into the joy of his Lord. Nothing, on the other hand, can more directly tend, as we have before

shown, to poison all earthly enjoyment, than that haunting and harrowing fear of death, as the termination of all earthly happiness, and the entrance on a dreaded eternity, from whose tormenting intrusion the votary of the world can never entirely escape.

Were I then asked, what I considered the most infallible specific for the enjoyment of life, I would answer without hesitation—conquer on scriptural grounds the fear of death; for never till you have learned, at the foot of the cross, to triumph over the fear of death, will you be able, in any rational sense of the word, to enjoy life. But once you can with truth say—“With me to live is Christ, and therefore to die will be gain,” you have discovered the true secret of human happiness. Yes! once you are enabled, as a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, to regard death as disarmed of all its terrors, and the grave as the gate of eternal life—the portal of heaven—then (*but not till then*) you are indeed in a condition and capacity to enter on the enjoyment of life.

For then, instead of being perpetually haunted by the reflection, that as each day is passing over, it is bringing you nearer to the termination of all your hopes and happiness, and the hour of conflict with your direst foe, and of entrance on a dark eternity, you will be cheered and gladdened by the thought that each day, as it rolls along, is bringing you nearer that happy, happy hour, when your earthly warfare shall be accomplished, and you shall see the Saviour, whom you so love, face to face, and rejoice in His presence with unutterable joy. Now is it not obvious, that this anticipation will capacitate you for the very sweetest enjoyment of whatever happiness the purified pleasures of earth can supply? *Must you not be happy when, as each day goes over, you can say to yourself—“I*

am a day nearer heaven—a day nearer the blissful interview with my beloved Saviour, when I shall see Him as He is, and bend, in adoring rapture, before His throne?" Must not the cup of earthly bliss taste sweeter to your lips—from the remembrance that even death itself, or the Son of Man coming in His glory, will only take it from you, for the purpose of putting into your hands the cup of unmixed felicity which glorified spirits quaff from the fountain of light, and life, and love in heaven?

Yes! I repeat it, let but heaven be once looked on and loved as your eternal home—and a Saviour's righteousness be exclusively and gratefully confided in as your only title to its blessedness and glory—so that you can feel privileged, on *such* a ground, to anticipate its possession with an unclouded and unwavering hope, and, believe me, you will from that moment begin to *enjoy* your journey here below.

When once this world is looked on in its proper light, as but the land of the Christian's pilgrimage to his heavenly home, and all its enjoyments are regarded and participated in with a traveller's eye and a traveller's heart, who is still looking and longing for his happy home, then indeed, wilderness a world as it is, "joy and gladness will be found therein—thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." Its objects of attractiveness and springs of pleasure, when no longer clung to with idolatrous attachment or regarded as the supreme sources of happiness, will yield that measure of subordinate satisfaction which a bountiful Creator designed them to afford; while that satisfaction will be unimpaired by the apprehension, which the idolater of earth can never entirely allay, that death may in a moment tear from the heart *all* to which it clings, with desperate tenacity, for happiness or hope.

Whatever is innocently enjoyable of earthly bliss, viewed as the comfortable accommodation and pleasurable incidents of a journey which is conducting the heaven-bound pilgrim to his home beyond the skies, where his heart already is and he hopes himself ere long to be, will afford a real and substantial satisfaction, which the most innocent earthly enjoyments can never yield when the heart cleaves to them with idolatrous affection; and, forgetful of that happier world which is the Christian's home, is content here to take up its rest, and concentrate all its aspirations and affections, its desires and hopes, on the perishable pleasures of this dying world. The feeling that his chief happiness is secure, beyond the reach of death itself to destroy—yea! that death, if the Saviour come not first, is the very herald that will come to announce to him that the period for entering on the possession of the fulness of joy in the presence of his God has arrived, enables the Christian to contemplate every, even the most cherished, source of earthly happiness with a feeling of composure and security, which contributes immensely to his increased enjoyment of that happiness. It gives him a delightful conviction, that he can never be a bankrupt in true happiness, because the vessel which is freighted with his heart's dearest hopes, and most precious treasures, can never be wrecked, for it is inviolably safe under his covenant God's protecting care, and even death can only come “to land it safe on Canaan's shore.” Surely such a conviction must have the most powerful influence in promoting the happiness of the heart in which it abidingly dwells.

We see then how indispensable it is for the true enjoyment of life, that the fear of death should be subdued, and the prospect of entering on the eternal world be anticipated with cheerful hope, if not triumphant exultation, as the commencement of a

happiness that will never end. Nor must we, in a world like this, so full of lamentation, and mourning, and wo, forget, in forming our estimate of the influence which the religion of the gospel, by dispelling this fear, and brightening this prospect, exercises over the happiness of the heart where it is enthroned, that the anticipation of heaven, as the happy home to which death will introduce him, enables the Christian, not merely to enjoy with a sweeter relish every purer source of earthly pleasure, but also to bear with cheerful resignation every conceivable burden of earthly grief. The very same prospect which enhances joy, softens sorrow. The vista view of an opening heaven at once brightens every scene of terrestrial bliss, and gilds the gloom of all terrestrial wo. If clouds gather round the pathway of the traveller to the skies—if the smile of earthly love be darkened, and the hopes that once gladdened him are shrouded in the tomb—if health decline, and spirits droop, and every spring of earthly enjoyment be dried up, still is the Christian pilgrim's fainting spirit cheered by that one sweet thought—“My journey here may be sorrowful, but it must be short. A few more steps in the wilderness, and I shall reach my home—my happy heavenly home! A few more ‘tossings on life's troubled sea,’ and I shall be safely moored in that haven where no storm can disturb the spirit's deep and everlasting repose. The friends that once brightened my pathway by their smile, may be changed in their affection, or torn from me by absence or by death; but I shall soon see that changeless, deathless Friend, who died for me, and whose smile will never, never fade away, but brighten with ever-increasing joy an eternity of bliss.” How must this prospect steal away from sorrow almost all its bitterness! And light will grief's heaviest burden seem, when its weight is

alleviated by the thought, how soon it will be laid down by the emancipated spirit, and everlasting joy be taken up in its stead, at the gate of heaven.

Now contrast with this the worldling's wretchedness, when the props on which he has leaned for support give way—when the streams of earthly enjoyment to him are dried up, and the hopes to which he has clung wither and decay. *He* has no bright prospect in the coming futurity to cheer the gloom of present grief. No vista view of an opening heaven charms away *his* gaze from the scenes of surrounding desolation. When the fabric of his earthly happiness is in ruins, no voice of mercy tells him of a house not made with hands, reserved for him in heaven. When the storm of affliction rages, threatening to destroy his frail and shattered bark, no peaceful haven spreads before *his* eyes its sheltering arms. No messenger from a Father of mercies whispers to his soul that yet a little while, and He that cometh will come, and then he shall bid an everlasting farewell to sorrow; for God himself shall wipe away all tears from his eye, and everlasting joy shall be upon his head. Death speaks to him no language of consolation. Death is to him the king of terrors. And, however deep the surrounding darkness in which his soul is shrouded, when he looks forward to the grave, it is with a shuddering thrill of horror, from the fearful apprehension, that his spirit will by death be plunged into immeasurably deeper gloom, even “the blackness of darkness for ever.” Oh! who can conceive the agony of that man, with whom life has no charm and death no comfort—who has lost *all* in this world to which he looked for happiness, and has *nothing* in the world beyond the grave to which he can look with hope—who is loath to live, yet afraid to die—who is overwhelmed, at the present, with the insupportable sorrows of time, and has no an-

ticipation connected with the future, *except* that, when the hour of dissolution or the descending Saviour comes, he will exchange them for the far more intolerable sorrows of eternity!

To dwell longer on this harrowing picture is too painful—nor is it necessary, in order to substantiate the position with which we set out. For surely we have already said enough to prove that since the religion of the Gospel, by enabling the Christian to triumph over the fear of death, and to cherish a constant and delightful anticipation of the day of Christ's second coming, abidingly exulting in the “blessed hope” connected with His “glorious” appearing,—since, I say, the Gospel, by enabling the Christian *thus* to rejoice in the prospect of eternity, enables him to enjoy with increased relish every pure source of earthly happiness, and to endure, with cheerful resignation, every possible burden of earthly sorrow; while, on the other hand, the enjoyments of the worldling are all imbibited, and his sorrows all aggravated, by the fear of death, which poisons his every pleasure, and darkens with the gloom of despair, and the anticipated horrors of eternal wo, his every grief—since these things are so, surely our position is triumphantly established, that true religion is promotive of the true happiness of man.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

THE fourth ground on which I propose to establish the claims of the Gospel to be regarded as the patroness of true happiness, is, that its tendency and design are to eradicate all those passions and tempers

which are inimical, and to cherish all those which are friendly to human happiness.

That happiness depends more on character than circumstances, is a truth, confirmed alike by the testimony of Scripture and the experience of mankind. Take an individual in whose heart the love of God is the reigning passion, and whose character is modelled, in all its features, to a close resemblance to the character of God; and place him in what circumstances you please, and still his happiness will be secure—unaffected, as to its essential qualities, by any change in his outward condition. Immure him in a dungeon—his spirit will still exult in conscious liberty, because “to bind *him* is a vain attempt, whom God delights in, and in whom He dwells.” A Saviour’s smile will turn *his* prison into a palace, and the gloom of its solitude shall be brightened by that Saviour’s presence, and made vocal with the sounds of rejoicing and the songs of praise. At midnight, in the prison at Philippi, Paul and Silas sang praises unto God. In fact, place the man whose character is conformed to the image of the Son of God in what condition or circumstances you please, and he will carry his happiness along with him, wherever he goes, safely lodged within his own bosom, and there protected from every external assault by that Almighty Saviour in whom he trusts. On the other hand, surround a character of the opposite stamp—one in whom the sinful passions of our fallen nature reign with uncontrollable violence—surround such a character with whatever materials of earthly enjoyment you can conceive to be combined together—invest him with unlimited power—lavish on him immeasurable wealth—let every avenue to earthly pleasure be open to him, and every desire of his heart for earthly joy be fully gratified—and still the man is a stranger to true happiness. He carries a hell within him in the tyranny of sinful passions, and from that hell, go where he will, he cannot escape.

In full accordance with this sentiment, we find that a primary place is assigned in the Gospel scheme, (which is a divine system for the restoration of true happiness to the human race,) to that renewal in the divine image, that conformity to the divine character, in which the very essence of true happiness consists. It is there as explicitly revealed, that the Son of God shrouded the glories of Deity under the veil of a human form, for the purpose of exhibiting for our imitation all the imitable features of the divine character, as for the purpose of offering up, in the nature which had sinned, a full, perfect, and all-sufficient sacrifice for sin. Conformity to His image is there unequivocally declared to be as essential, for the full salvation of His people, as trust in His atonement! To walk in His footsteps is as indispensable a badge of true discipleship in His professing followers, as to rely on His righteousness. Nor is the office of God the Holy Spirit, in renewing the believer's soul in the divine image, in righteousness and true holiness, less essential to the enjoyment of that salvation, which the Son of God has purchased for His people with his own blood, than is the office of that Spirit in convincing him of sin, and leading him to repose an undivided dependence on the infinitely meritorious sacrifice and obedience of his divine surety and Saviour, Jehovah-Jesus.

Can it for a moment be questioned, that one principal objection for which the character of the Saviour is so fully developed in the recorded history of His life, is, that His faithful followers may be enabled to study it with devout attention; and, by divine grace, be so transformed into a resemblance to all its lovely features, that they may be indeed "one with Christ," by such an identity with Him, in the spirit of His character, and the prevailing desires and purposes which distinguish Him, as will make them partakers of His happiness in that very point which constitutes its essential element, even His perfect holiness?

Nor can I here refrain from expressing my conviction, that it is not sufficiently remembered by the believer in the meditations of his chamber, or enforced by the minister in the addresses from the pulpit, that in the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the character of the blessed God exhibited to our view, under the most attractive and endearing aspect. There we behold every divine perfection, if one may be allowed the expression, humanized—their splendour shining, with a sweet and shaded lustre, through the mystic veil of a human form! There we behold the boundless benevolence of the Deity (which, when viewed as administering to the happiness of all created existences throughout the universe, overwhelms our weak vision) brought within the reach of our grasp, by being displayed before us in the unwearied benevolence of a self-denying Philanthropist, found in fashion like unto ourselves, as a man who went about continually doing good to the souls and bodies of all the children of sorrow that came within His reach! There we behold the essential holiness of the Deity, before whose excessive brightness cherubim and seraphim veil their dazzled eyes, presented to us as an object on which we can gaze with undazzled though delighted gaze, in the unspotted purity of the man Christ Jesus, who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners!”

There we behold the compassion of the Godhead in the tears of Jesus beside the tomb of Lazarus; or in those He shed when He beheld the city that He loved, His own Jerusalem—and, as He thought of its approaching destruction, wept over it! There we behold the long-suffering patience of the Godhead, in the tender forbearance with which the compassionate Saviour pitied and endured the waywardness, the ingratitude, the desertion of His beloved disciples; and there, too, not to go further into the detail, we hear the forgiveness of that God “who de-

lighteth in mercy, and taketh no pleasure in the death of the sinner," but rather rejoiceth in pardoning the penitent; we hear it most affectingly expressed in that most touching prayer, breathed forth from the lips of the expiring Saviour, on behalf of His murderers—"Father, forgive them! for they know not what they do!"

Now when we consider how indispensably necessary, for the attainment of true happiness, is a conformity to the character of God, (for without it heaven itself could not render an archangel happy; and opposition to it is the image of Satan, the element of hell!) is it not a cause of the deepest gratitude, that we have this adorable character exhibited before us in the Lord Jesus Christ—in the person, that is, of our best, our dearest Friend, under circumstances the most powerfully calculated to endear it to our hearts, and to attract towards it our warmest feelings of reverential admiration and adoring love? Oh! do we reflect at all as we ought on the stupendous fact, that the Almighty once walked this earth of ours under the form of a man like ourselves, and has embodied, in the words He spake, the feelings He displayed, and the actions He performed, during His sojourn among the dwellers of mortality, those qualities of character, those tempers and dispositions, which are indispensably required to capacitate us for enjoying the happiness of heaven? Surely the consideration, that in studying the history of our adorable Redeemer, we are watching the development of the character of "God manifest in the flesh," ought to attract us, with irresistible influence, to the study of this history, and the contemplation of this character! We should hang with delighted interest on every the minutest movement of a life so infinitely endeared to us by the manifestation of marvellous love to our guilty race. We should gaze with the most intense admiration on every the minutest development of a character by conformity with which we can alone be

made like to God, and meet for heaven; and above all, under an overwhelming sense of our own weakness and worthlessness, we should pray most fervently that the Holy Spirit would, by His divine power, mould our characters into the closest resemblance to that only perfect pattern of all excellence, in which the glory of the Godhead shines through a veil of flesh.

But while we thus advert, in the general, to the character of Christ as the character of God, for the purpose of substantiating our position, that the religion of the Gospel, by producing conformity to this character, promotes our true happiness, it may be desirable, somewhat more in detail, to show, that by conformity to each particular feature of this divine character our happiness is advanced; as this is tantamount to proving our fourth argument, namely, that the Gospel eradicates such tempers and dispositions as are inimical, and cherishes such as are friendly, to human happiness.

How fully is this view established by the beatitudes pronounced by our Lord in His sermon on the mount, which incontestably prove, that those who are truly religious are alone truly happy, by the verdict of the only infallible judge of true happiness! These beatitudes will indeed be regarded as altogether decisive testimony on this subject, if we consider more attentively the person by whom, and the circumstances under which they were proclaimed.

They are, as touching the nature of true happiness, the testimony of Him who is Himself the source and centre of all happiness, and therefore cannot be mistaken on this point.

Blessed assuredly are those whom *He*, who is the fountain of all blessedness, pronounces to be such! We have therefore in these beatitudes the recorded judgment, as to what constitutes true felicity, of the ever-blessed God. Should not *this* be deemed sufficient to decide the question?

But further, the testimony was given at a time which stamps on it peculiar value—when our blessed Lord was just commencing His ministry of mercy in the world, for whose redemption He had left His own bright dwelling-place of ineffable glory and bliss.

Pronounced at such a time, by the Divine Philanthropist who had visited our earth on a mission of redeeming love, how impressively does our gracious Redeemer, in those beatitudes, cry out to the children of men—Hearken unto Me, all ye who are searching after happiness, and I will show you wherein alone it consists! Yea! come unto Me, and I will point out to you the only path! I know the erroneous opinions you have formed on this subject; I know the undue value you attach to earthly objects, to power, and grandeur, and gaiety, and wealth; happy, you think, are the children of prosperity, who have an abundance of this world's goods, as they are falsely called, and can therefore command all the resources of earthly enjoyment; but trust One who loves you better than you love yourselves—One who has come down from His glory expressly to make the children of men happy—One who will not deceive you, and who cannot be Himself deceived. It is *not* the powerful, or the rich, or the gay, or the prosperous, that are truly happy. No: “Blessed, I say, are the poor in spirit—Blessed are the pure in heart—Blessed are the meek, the merciful, the peace-makers! Blessed are they that mourn—they that hunger and thirst after righteousness!”

Mark! the poor in spirit, *not* the proud!—the pure in heart, *not* the voluptuary!—the meek and merciful, *not* the overbearing and resentful!—the makers, *not* the disturbers of peace—they that mourn with godly sorrow, *not* they that revel in godless gaiety!—they that hunger and thirst, *not* after riches, *but* righteousness—*not* after the applause of man, *but* the favour of God—*not* after the intoxicating

pleasures of earth, *but* after the holy happiness of heaven !

Oh ! does not this language of our Divine Redeemer, testifying that happiness is a thing of *character*, not of *circumstances*, appeal with irresistible conviction to our hearts, when we reflect, that He who uttered it, and who cannot be mistaken in His judgment, has given us such an affecting proof of His unbounded love, and intense solicitude for our happiness, by laying down His life for us on the cross ? — Could even He, almighty as He is, have given us a stronger proof of His love, His desire for our happiness ? Let us then read the opening of the Sermon on the mount by the light cast on it from the cross of Calvary, and surely we must feel convinced, that if ever we would attain to real happiness, we must seek for it at the foot of the Saviour's cross, as pardoned and accepted through His blood, in the acquisition of those tempers and dispositions which the Saviour has so emphatically declared to be indissolubly linked with substantial blessedness.

We must, also, be earnest and fervent in prayer, that the Holy Spirit—who alone can—would implant them in our hearts; and work in us, by His almighty power, that inward conformity to our Redeemer's image, by which alone we can be made partakers of the happiness of those whom *He* calls blessed.

I would, therefore, now proceed, according to our proposed plan, to examine, more in detail, several of the lovelier features of this divine character, contrasted with their opposites, for the purpose of proving, that in conformity to those features true happiness essentially consists. Let us contrast, for this purpose, (in the first instance,) humility and pride; and see how immensely the scale preponderates in favour of the former over the latter, when they are viewed in reference to their respective influences on the happiness of those hearts in which they preside.

That humility was a prominent feature in the Saviour's character, is too obvious to require any argument to prove. The inconceivable condescension manifested by Him, who though He was from all eternity "in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet took on Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" the lowly rank of life which He assumed when He tabernacled in the flesh; the threefold beatitude—"Blessed are the *poor* in spirit, blessed are they that *mourn*, blessed are the *meek*;" the selection of this quality from amongst all which adorned His character, for the peculiar study and imitation of His disciples, so impressively enforced on our attention by those affecting words, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart;" the diversified manner in which He inculcated the cultivation of this loveliest of the Christian graces, by placing a little child before His followers as the object of their imitation, and assuring them, that unless they became like little children, they could not be His disciples—by the beautiful parable of the Pharisee and the Publican—by the express declaration, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"—and, above all, by His own example, in every act of His life, and more especially, in washing His disciples' feet for the very purpose of leaving to His people an example of humility, that they should in this, as every other exhibition of His character, follow His steps;—all these prove how pre-eminently solicitous the Saviour was, that His faithful followers should be "clothed with humility"—that garment of the soul which is beautiful even in the eyes of God.

And what abundant provision is made by the very constitution of the Gospel scheme to implant this loveliest of all the Christian graces in the human heart!

The conviction, that, as sinners, we are deserving of the everlasting wrath of an offended God, whose unbounded loving-kindness we have requited with the basest ingratitude—that so deep was the dye of our guilt, it could be expiated by no atonement less costly than the sacrifice of God's co-equal Son—washed out in no fountain less precious than His blood; the assurance, that, if accepted at all, it must be as being clothed in the Redeemer's righteousness, not our own, and entitled to an inheritance in heaven exclusively on the ground of His meritorious obedience unto death; the consciousness, if we are united to the Saviour by a living faith, that, though the Holy Spirit has vouchsafed, in His infinite condescension, to take up His abode in our heart, and there established the hatred of sin, and the love of holiness, still the sin we hate, however dethroned, is not destroyed, and the holiness we love, however perseveringly pursued, is not perfectly attained; the cleaving of defilement to our souls amidst all our watchfulness and prayers, and the sense of deficiency in the discharge of every duty, however faithfully or zealously we may strive to perform them; the little progress made, after years of experimental acquaintance with His preciousness, in conformity to the Saviour's character, or in meetness for heaven;—all this is assuredly most powerfully calculated to keep the child of God continually in an attitude of humility, always prepared to cast his blood-bought crown, in self-renouncing lowness of heart, at the foot of his beloved Redeemer's throne.

But how, it may be said, does humility tend to promote happiness? Directly, by promoting gratitude to God, which is the source and sweetener of all true happiness. In truth, the theory of human happiness may be briefly stated thus:—True happiness is always proportioned to the measure of our cordial life-influencing gratitude to God, and this is always proportioned to the depth of our humility in

His sight. In other words, in proportion as we are truly grateful to God, we are truly happy; and we are thus grateful in proportion as we are humble. Why is this? Because an humble spirit, profoundly penetrated with a sense of its own unworthiness, is kept in a state of delighted amazement at the unbounded long-suffering and loving-kindness of God. When a Christian, deeply imbued with such a spirit, contrasts what he has received with what he has deserved; when he contrasts what, as a believer, he is privileged to expect, with what, as a sinner, he was warranted to anticipate, as his *eternal* inheritance—that is, when he contrasts heaven and all its glory, “the fulness of joy in God’s presence, and the pleasures at His right hand for evermore,” with hell and all its torments, “the worm that dieth not, and the fire that shall never be quenched,” he is so astonished at the unmerited goodness of his God, that his heart continually overflows with gratitude, and he finds by his sweet experience, that a thankful heart is a continual feast. This frame of mind disposes him to receive the smallest mercies with the most fervent thankfulness, and the severest trials with the most cheerful resignation; and thus adds immeasurably to the sweetness of the one, and takes away almost all their bitterness from the other. That his blessings should be so numberless, when he has not merely not merited any, but has merited only the heaviest curses at the hand of God; and that his trials should be so light, compared with the eternal weight of woe he has deserved, is to him a cause of unfailing thankfulness, and this thankfulness is a spring of as unfailing joy. It sheds a gleam of golden light over all his pathway through the wilderness, brightening every scene of gladness or of grief through which he has to pass. It pours a divine elixir into the cup of life, that not merely gives a richer flavour to all its joys, but sweetens all its sorrows too. It teaches the in-

valuable secret of extracting sources of enjoyment, and materials for praise, out of every dispensation of God's fatherly hand. It is the true philosopher's stone, which turns whatever it touches into gold. A thankful spirit (and a *really* humble, is *always* a thankful spirit) is gifted with a miraculous power of extracting honey out of poison, good out of evil, happiness out of wo. The daily mercies of preservation and providence, which so many receive without one emotion of gratitude, or one thrill of gladness, pour into a thankful heart an unceasing tide of pure pleasure, from which continually ascends before the throne of God the hymn of grateful praise.

Can it be then a matter of doubtful speculation, whether, or how, the spirit of humility promotes true happiness, when it thus opens, and keeps ever flowing, in the human heart, that spring of gratitude to God which is the source of all real felicity on earth or in heaven?—when it thus invests all the blessings of creative goodness, providential bounty, and redeeming love, with such inestimable preciousness and sweetness, making them all minister so abundantly to the happiness of the heart where it dwells? And if the religion of the Gospel were to rest its claims to the character of the patroness of true happiness, exclusively on the ground of thus implanting and cherishing in the human heart humility, that precious seed of heavenly origin, which bears, as we have seen, such heavenly fruit, who could deny its claims when thus authenticated by the abiding gladness of spirit, and the continual songs of praise, with which it inspires the humble thankful child of God!

But (independently of its influence in imparting a contented frame of mind, which we shall hereafter consider—and contentment is the very essence, the infallible specific for true felicity) there is another way in which humility tends to promote happiness, by leading its possessor to receive with forbearance

and meekness the manifold provocations and annoyances, which are continually occurring in our intercourse with our fellow-men; and which so gall and irritate the spirit of a proud man, keeping it in a state of constant disquietude and mortification. The really humble spirit, always remembering its own unworthiness, and regarding whatever trials, in the shape of unjust or unkind treatment, may be inflicted by the hand of man, as coming, in the way of fatherly correction, from the hand of God, is prepared to meet them with a patience and composure which extract from them almost all their sting, and well nigh entirely deprive them of their power to give pain. The very same behaviour, which almost provokes to madness a proud spirit, will only excite the pity, without ruffling the peace, of an humble one. The proud man, like the towering tree, confronts the tempest; and if not overthrown by it, is yet convulsed through his whole agitated frame. The humble man, like the lowly shrub, bends before the blast, and the storm passes over him, almost without discomposing the serenity of his soul. Oh! there is a deep, a holy calm diffused throughout the soul where the spirit of true humility has fixed its abode! The ungenerous insinuation, the unjust reproach, the bitter sarcasm, the contemptuous sneer—(and who can hope to escape from these?)—all, all are ineffectual to disturb the peace of such a soul, for humility prompts the tranquillizing recollection, that however, in one sense, they may be unmerited at the hands of man, infinitely more of reproach and condemnation has been deserved at the hands of God; and viewing the bitter draught as presented by *His* hand, the humble Christian meekly receives it with a submissive smile, exclaiming, in a spirit of cheerful resignation to His will, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

Now, when we consider how much our happiness

depends on its resources being placed out of the reach of those petty vexations, and irritating trials of temper, which are so continually assaulting us, if not in our domestic, yet at least in our social intercourse, we may be convinced how materially humility tends to the promotion of our happiness, by supplying us with such an effectual antidote for the poison with which the injustice and unkindness of our fellow-men would otherwise imbitter all our enjoyments. And it tends still further to this result, by imparting to every little act of kindness, or token of affection, which we receive from others, a brighter colouring, and a sweeter flavour. The numberless little offices of affectionate attention to our wants or wishes, which friends or the members of our family circle may perform, and which are all received coldly and thanklessly, as matters of right, by a man of a proud spirit, and so excite no pleasurable emotions in his breast,—these are all appreciated at their full value, as manifestations of disinterested love, and enjoyed as such with a sweet and grateful relish, by the man who has learned of the Saviour to be “meek and lowly of heart.” Like the rich soft soil, on which there falls not a single drop of refreshing rain that does not produce a grateful return, in its increased fertility, the humble spirit receives with thankfulness and joy the smallest favour that affection can bestow—nor is a single drop of disinterested kindness ever poured on such a spirit in vain; while the proud spirit, like the cold, hard, barren, rock, will receive the richest showers of kindness that affection can pour out without the slightest return of grateful or of gladdening emotion—but remains, after they have all descended upon it, as cold, and hard, and barren as before. Which spirit, need we ask, is the happier of the two?

Nor should we overlook, in thus contrasting the effects of humility and pride, as connected with human happiness, that while the former, as we have

seen, tends to promote it, by promoting gratitude to God for the smallest mercies, and cheerful submission under the greatest afflictions, the latter is directly destructive of it, inasmuch as it deprives God's choicest gifts of their sweetest influences, and adds ten thousand-fold aggravated bitterness to every afflictive dispensation. The proud man is never thankful. Let a bountiful God heap on him what benefits He may, they kindle in his breast no spark of grateful love to the Giver of all good; and thus is he deprived of one of the sweetest sources of happiness to the human heart. In the self-sufficiency of his arrogance, he esteems the most abundant measure of earthly prosperity as only his just desert; and, like the haughty monarch of old, when contemplating the fabric of earthly greatness to which the providence of God has raised him, exclaims, in the pride of his heart, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

Now, can it require any process of argument to prove, that when a worm of the dust is thus inflated with impious arrogance, he is essentially incapacitated for the enjoyment of true happiness? He is then exhibiting, in frightful development, the most revolting features of the image of Satan—he is then actuated by the very spirit which (we have reason to believe) prompted this apostate angel to rebel against God, and expelled him out of heaven—he is then breathing the very atmosphere of hell, for there pride reigns in full and uncontrolled ascendancy. Can such a man be happy? And if even, while possessed of the fullest measure of earthly prosperity, there is that within the bosom of the proud man which, in the very nature of things, necessarily unfit him for the enjoyment of true felicity, oh! when affliction, in some of its desolating shapes, falls upon him, how intensely aggravated, how utterly uncom-

forted, is the anguish that, like a consuming worm, incessantly preys upon his soul! Pride minglesthe most envenomed poison in his cup of trial. He feels towards the blessed God, whom he regards as the cruel author of his misery, all the malignant rage of impotent resentment. Not convinced, or confessing, that he is chastened far less than his transgressions have deserved, his haughty spirit is irritated and imbibited by the galling reflection, that he is unjustly oppressed and afflicted by a hand which he hates, and yet cannot escape from or resist; and whose every infliction he looks on as the vindictive stroke of tyrannical power, not the gentle correction of fatherly love. Thus while the humble believer, under the pressure of affliction, like the lamb before her shearers, is dumb, and openeth not his mouth, and, by this meek submission to a Father's chastening hand, experiences such comfort in the midst of trials, as enables him even to "rejoice in tribulation," the proud man, like a baited wild bull, galled and agonized by the blows which assault him on every side, chafes and frets in impotent fury, and is irritated even to madness by every wound that pierces his tortured frame.

And while the afflictive dispensations which come from the hand of God, thus irritate and torture the proud spirit that has not learned to bow, with meek submissive resignation, to His chastening hand, such a spirit is continually fretted and disquieted by the real or fancied injuries and insults which it meets with at the hands of man. The proud man is exposed to incessant mortification, inasmuch as he is incessantly looking for such homage as his fellow men are little disposed to pay; and thus is he perpetually experiencing the bitterest disappointment, because he construes every unintentional slight into a studied affront; and scarcely ever is treated with the measure of respect which he fancies himself en-

tituled to receive. Now when we contrast *such* a state of mind with that which we have before shown to be the abiding state of an humble spirit, can we for a moment doubt which of the two is the most favourable for the promotion of true happiness in the human heart?

And should not this conviction of the happy influence of true humility constrain us, if we may indeed hope that the Holy Spirit has already planted in our hearts this loveliest of the Christian graces, to cherish it with the tenderest care; and to implore this blessed Spirit to deepen it, and make it more influential every day? Should we not anxiously watch, and pray, and strive against the first risings of pride—above all, spiritual pride? Should we not be ever ready to strangle the serpent the moment it lifts its hydra-head, lest it pour the venom of its poison into our soul, and there blight all our spiritual graces, and imbitter all our spiritual joys? Should we not keep the sense of our manifold offences, our continual short-comings, our deep unworthiness, continually before our view? By abidingly maintaining our station at the foot of the cross—by contrasting the mercies we have received with the returns we have made—what God has done for our happiness with what we have done for his glory—by bringing our character into the light of the Saviour's, and beholding in that pure light our defilements and deficiencies—by weighing our discharge of every duty in the balance of the sanctuary, and examining, by the standard of God's word, the use we have made of the talents intrusted to our charge—by remembering on what tenure we hold our hopes of heaven, even the merits of Him who alone is worthy; and what is the only acceptable wedding garment in which to appear at the marriage supper of the Lamb, even the robe of His righteousness—by thus cultivating this excellent grace of hu-

mility, and especially by looking to, and leaning upon, and beseeching of, the Holy Spirit to promote its growth, we may hope to enjoy and exhibit more and more of the sweet and attractive influences of this loveliest ornament of the Christian character, which brings such a bright assemblage of graces and blessings in its train. Thus shall we be habitually prepared, with all the ransomed of the Lord, when He shall come in the day of His glorious appearing, to bend in lowly adoration at our Redeemer's feet—to cast our crown, in profound humility, before His throne—crying out from the depths of an humble and therefore a grateful heart, “*Thou art worthy—for Thou hast redeemed me unto God by Thy blood!* *Thou art worthy—for Thou hast clothed me with Thy righteousness!* *Thou art worthy—for Thou hast sanctified me by Thy grace!* Worthy indeed of everlasting love, adoration, and praise! For all I am, all I have, all I shall throughout eternity enjoy, I owe to Thee.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

LET us now contrast the influence of covetousness and ambition with that of contentment on human happiness, and assuredly we shall here also find the scale to preponderate in favour of true religion. The man who cherishes an inordinate desire of wealth or power, never can enjoy true peace of mind. Like the poor victim of dropsical disease, he is tormented with an insatiable thirst, which increased draughts of earthly prosperity, (even if he is successful in its pursuit,) so far from quenching,

only inflame. No matter what accumulation of riches the miser may have amassed, or what height of elevation the ambitious man may have attained, they are still dissatisfied, still thirsting for more, still grasping at more—like the restless Macedonian monarch, who, after having conquered what was then called the world, wept that he had no more worlds to conquer. Besides, just consider, with such characters, what a train of malignant and miserable passions always attends their career. Envy, pining at the sight of a more successful competitor's triumph, and hating him for having snatched from its grasp the coveted prize; jealousy, watching with malevolent gaze, every candidate for the contested post of honour, and sickening at the very thought of their success; the agonizing fear of disappointment, which keeps the feverish spirit in a state of incessant disquietude, so that, “like the troubled sea, it cannot rest;” and, in what a multitude of instances, the chilling blight of disappointment itself, withering all the fondly cherished hopes of earthly advancement, and breathing over the spirit the death-like desolation of despair! But even suppose the career of covetousness or ambition to be as successful as their most enthusiastic votaries could desire, still how unsatisfying is the enjoyment which the most triumphant success can impart! How uniformly is the heart disappointed *in*, even if the possessor has not been disappointed *of*, the object of his idolatrous pursuit! What a *mere* trifle can mar all his happiness, and mingle bitterness with the intoxicating cup that prosperity has filled to the brim! Look at Haman! He had attained the summit of his ambitious aspirations. The prime favourite of the mightiest monarch of his age—the man whom the king delighted to honour—must not *he* be perfectly happy, if earthly pomp and power can confer such happiness? Assuredly. Well, then,

listen to his exclamation, while reviewing and repeating to his family all the proofs of his sovereign's favour, all the honours that had been heaped upon him, all the glory of his riches, and how the king had advanced him above the princes—and how the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared except himself—just listen to his exclamation in the very moment of his proudest triumph! Hear *him* exclaiming, “*All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see*”—what? some rival, almost as highly honoured as himself?—no! no—but “so long as I see *Mordecai the Jew, sitting at the king's gate!*” Oh the utter impotency of all that earthly ambition can grasp to satisfy the human heart, when a poor man, sitting at the king's gate, can poison all the happiness which that king's favour, lavishing the most munificent proof of its affection, can bestow! What! Is the proud Haman's happiness, in the very plenitude of his power, at the very moment when all his ambitious aspirations have been realized, at the mercy of a Mordecai?—Yes! and there is always some Mordecai to imbitter every Haman's happiness. There is always some unsatisfied desire—some (it may be despised) object, that will not do homage to the proud man, and by that refusal compels him, amidst all his grandeur, to complain in the bitterness of his soul, while looking with a discontented eye on *all* he has attained, *All this availeth me nothing, so long as that one ungratified desire tortures my wounded spirit, and disappointment pours its venomous poison into my heart!*

And look into the heart of Haman at the moment he uttered this exclamation, and say, if happiness had taken up its abode there? What is the passion rankling in his bosom, and turning his tortured spirit into an inward hell? Hatred, diabolical hatred—prompting the murder of the unoffending object

of his resentful rage! Is not one glance into that heart enough to prove, that ambition, even in its most successful career, is not the path that leads to true and satisfying happiness, linked as it is with those diabolical passions which infuse into the human heart the virulence and the venom of the malignity and misery of hell?

Look again at Solomon! Was ever the experiment to find happiness in all that earth can boast, made on so magnificent a scale as by him? Raised to the pinnacle of earthly grandeur—swaying the sceptre of the land which was the peculiar object of Jehovah's favour—the fame of his wisdom spread over the earth—possessed of unbounded wealth, there was no cup of earthly enjoyment which he did not drain to the dregs—no scheme of earthly happiness which the heart can desire, or the imagination conceive, that he did not pursue on the most splendid scale. And what was the result? He has left it on record, for our warning, emblazoned in characters so clear that he who runs may read—imbodied in a sentence so impressive as to speak with affecting solemnity to the heart—“All is vanity and vexation of spirit!” Vanity and vexation of spirit!—Was *this* the result of *Solomon's* experiment in the pursuit of human happiness? And can any votary of the world hope to be more successful now? Who can anticipate a triumph in such a career, when Solomon, the wisest, the mightiest of monarchs, so miserably failed? Alas! how emphatically are we “fools, and slow of heart to believe” what the word of God has recorded for our admonition! How desperately are we resolved, unchecked by its warning voice, to make the trial for ourselves, and seek for satisfying happiness where the oracles of God and the experience of mankind combine their testimony to assure us that it never can be found! Who is deterred, by Solomon's mournful testimony,

from trying to reap contentment in the very field where he reaped only vanity and vexation? Who is restrained from coveting riches by the solemn—yea! the tremendous sentence that was uttered by the lips of eternal truth—“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven?” Who is satisfied with a lowly lot in life, persuaded that the meek, as to all its most precious treasures of enjoyment, “shall inherit the earth?” Yet so it is! The secret of true happiness is a contented spirit; and it is only the meek and lowly Christian that can with truth adopt the apostolical declaration—“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content!” Convinced that the arrangement of every event in which his real welfare is concerned, is in his heavenly Father’s hands, he is enabled to keep his soul in perfect peace amidst the fluctuations of outward affairs, from the assurance, that under the guidance and control of his covenant God, they must all, however diversified in aspect, be similar in result, as they must all work together eventually and eternally for his good.

This assurance spreads over the soul a holy calm, that tranquillizes every tumultuous agitation; and breathes into the deepest recesses of the heart that peace which passeth all understanding. Knowing also, that rank and riches are utterly incompetent in themselves to supply solid satisfaction to the soul, and that, viewing them in the scriptural light of talents intrusted to the Christian, as a steward, to be employed for his divine Master’s glory, he only incurs, by an increased measure of them, a proportionable increase of awful responsibility, he feels no intense anxiety to be burdened with a heavier load of accountableness than his divine Master sees fit to lay upon him. This view moderates his solicitude about the acquisition of a greater measure of wealth or power than he at present enjoys—because, al-

though willing cheerfully to bear any burden, however heavy, which his beloved Lord is pleased to impose on him, and to engage in any sphere of duty, however arduous, which *He* providentially appoints, still is he quite content if his Master shall see fit to arrange, in His infinite wisdom and love, that the burden of responsibility shall be comparatively light, the sphere of labour comparatively humble, that so he may be mercifully spared much of the anxiety and apprehension which are the inseparable attendants on heavier burdens, and more exalted spheres.

Thus cured of inordinate desires for the objects which this world idolizes, by a conviction of their intrinsic worthlessness, and utter insufficiency as sources of satisfying enjoyment—freed from the distracting hopes and fears which always accompany the career of covetousness and ambition, and rob their votaries of solid and substantial peace—content with the measures of earthly good which *He*, who so loved him as to give *Himself* for him, has allotted as his portion—and assured, that if a larger measure will be more conducive to his best interests, his real happiness, it will not be withheld, the true Christian enjoys his present allotment with a relish which nothing but gratitude to God can impart; and while diligently using every lawful effort for advancement, leaves the result, confidingly and cheerfully in the hands of his Saviour and his God.

Are not these considerations sufficient to prove that the religion of the gospel, by moderating the desire for rank and riches, restraining the indulgence of a covetous or ambitious spirit, and inculcating the lesson of cheerful contentment for the present, and cheerful confidingness for the future, exercises a most favourable influence on the happiness of its sincere followers, and tends to keep their souls

abidingly in perfect peace? And it is obvious how much this peaceful frame of mind will be at once, with the believer, recommended and preserved by the reflection, that, in thus maintaining a spirit of moderation and contentment, he is conformed to the image, and treading in the footsteps, of his beloved Master and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The sight of the manger where He was cradled, and the cross on which He expired—the humble station of life which He voluntarily assumed—“Is not this the carpenter?”—the deep poverty to which He submitted; for “the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head”—all this has invested, in a believer’s estimation, an humble rank of life with such respect, and poured such contempt on all earthly greatness and glory, that he is quite reconciled to comparative obscurity and poverty, should such be his appointed portion, since thus his condition in life is but brought to a greater resemblance to his beloved Master’s, and by being more closely assimilated to His circumstances, he may become, by divine grace, more closely assimilated to His character too. And thus it is, that by delivering the Christian from the dominion of those passions which, in every age of the world, have been the sources of so much misery, and conforming his character to the Saviour’s, in that spirit of unambitious contentment which is the best preservative of peace in the human heart, Christianity has done more for the true happiness of its votaries, than can be adequately conceived by any but those who have herein felt its blessed influences, distilling the balm of heaven’s own peace on the soul of man. And if ever the Christian should be tempted to complain of the lowness of his lot, how soon will the temptation be vanquished, and the spirit of cheerful contentment re-assume its empire in his

breast, when he earnestly implores the Holy Spirit to re-establish his peaceful dominion there, by leading him to look *back* on the deep humiliation, the lowly lot to which his beloved Saviour submitted for his sake—to look *up* to that Saviour, seated at the right hand of the Father, watching him with the tenderest affection, and arranging all the events of his life, with the most gracious adaptation to his peculiar character and circumstances, for the promotion of his everlasting welfare—and to look *forward* to the day of His appearance—that day which ought to be cherished with feelings of devout desire, and joyful anticipation in the believer's abiding recollection—that day, to him of inconceivable triumph, when the Lord he loves shall come to be glorified in His saints, and he, who deserved eternal wrath, shall be made a partaker of His glory, invested with a crown of light, and an inheritance of everlasting blessedness, even the fulness of joy in the presence of God, and at His right hand pleasures for evermore!

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

LET us now contrast a resentful with a forgiving spirit, and we shall see how much Christianity, by eradicating the former, and cherishing the latter, contributes to the happiness of her faithful disciples.

Among the passions which disturb the peace of the human heart, and fill it with such inward torture as none but those who have experienced its indescribable agony can comprehend, there is not one which exercises a more baneful influence than the passion of revenge.

It may indeed, be said to light up within the soul the fire of hell—a fire which, once it is kindled, if not allayed by the power of Christian love, rages unquenchably, and consumes the very vitals of enjoyment in the bosom where it burns. It is of the very essence of the character of Satan, and bears the brand of his accursed image, impressed with all the diabolical features of fiendish malignity upon the soul. The wretched victim of this hateful passion can never know one moment's peace of mind. The insult he has received rankles, like a barbed arrow, in his bleeding heart, and diffuses its envenomed poison there. Brooding incessantly over the affront, and the schemes of revenge by which it is to be expiated, his whole soul becomes so absorbed in the visions which the demon of hatred has conjured up, that he cannot derive even a momentary solace from the manifold sources of enjoyment by which he is encompassed. The figure of the object of his hatred haunts him like a spectre. Go where he will, it seems to follow his steps, repeating the insult which first provoked his vengeful indignation. It haunts him in the midst of all his pleasures and pursuits—in solitude or society—awake or asleep—by night and by day! At his meals, and his food cannot nourish—on his bed, and his sleep cannot refresh him! While the object of his hatred lives, and lives unpunished, the fire of resentment continually burns, and he is, without one moment's intermission, tormented in its flame.

But say he has accomplished his purpose of vengeance—say that he has succeeded in ruining the reputation, or the happiness, of the victim of his resentment—say that, under the influence of a code of honour, as it is called, which, in daring defiance of the law of God, and scornful contempt of the spirit of Christianity, sanctions revenge, and stamps its seal of approval on suicide and murder, bringing the foulest

blot on countries calling themselves Christian, and provoking the deepest displeasure of an offended God, at the outrage offered to the Gospel of His beloved Son—say that, under the sanction of this accursed code, he has satiated his revengeful spirit, by imbruining his hands in a brother's blood, and perhaps poured the bitterest anguish into the heart of a desolate family, where he has made the wife a widow, and the children fatherless—oh! is the man, who has thus fully accomplished all his diabolical disposition could desire, is he happy *now?* Yes! if Satan be happy, so may *he* be, who is a partaker of his spirit. Yes! if hell be the abode of peace, so may be the bosom where its fires are kindled, and its fiendish delight in the destruction of happiness revels uncontrolled.

How powerfully is the sinfulness of this anti-christian practice exposed in the well-known lines of the Christian poet! and how unanswerably do the subjoined verses of the word of God prove, that it is altogether incompatible with the genius of the Gospel, the character of its Founder, and the plainest precepts and prohibitions which He has enjoined on all that profess to bear His name!

"To trample on our Maker's laws,
And hazard life for any or no cause;
To rush into the fixed eternal state,
Out of the very flames of rage and hate;
Or send another shivering to the bar,
With all the guilt of such unnatural war;
Whatever use may urge, or honour plead,
On reason's verdict, is a madman's deed."—COWPER.

"Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow *His* steps, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again;—when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

"Avenge not yourselves—vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord."

"They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

There cannot, indeed, be a more melancholy proof how wide is the distinction between nominal and real

Christianity, than the prevalence of duelling in professedly Christian countries. When we consider how palpably this practice is opposed both to the precepts and the example of the divine Founder of our faith, and how utterly irreconcilable with the spirit of the religion which He came down from heaven to establish upon earth, and yet how extensively it is patronized and practised in Christian lands—does it not painfully prove, that, amongst the multitudes who profess and call themselves Christians, the number who are really entitled to the name is fearfully small? For, is not the advocacy of this practice a recognised principle of the code of honour adopted and acted upon by the men of the world? And are not all chargeable with the crime, in essence, who are resolved to commit it, whenever what such men call a justifiable provocation shall occur?

Now, were it not kept in remembrance, that such multitudes bear the name without even a wish to bear the image of Christ, might it not justly excite our unqualified surprise, that such a practice—based as it is on the principle that every man has a right, when injured, to avenge himself; and breathing, as it does, the spirit of unforgiving resentment and vindictive retaliation—should be avowedly advocated and adopted by the professed followers of Him, who came into our world on an errand of mercy towards those that had most deeply injured and insulted Him—of Him, whose whole life was one continued display of love to His enemies—who bore the most unmerited provocations with the most unconquerable patience—who offered up Himself as a sacrifice for the salvation of those that had persecuted Him even unto death—and poured out His expiring breath in a fervent prayer for the pardon of His murderers—Him, who expressly says to His followers, “Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; vengeance is mine—I will repay, saith the Lord?” How

can a greater mockery be imagined than the duellist calling himself a servant of *such* a Master—a disciple of *such* a Lord? Is he following the Saviour's footsteps? Is he conformed to *His* image? Is he modelled after *His* example? Is he meet for a heaven of love? What, in truth, are the essential characteristics of a true Christian, as they were of the adorable Redeemer Himself? Are they not humility and love? And what can be conceived more diametrically opposed to these than the spirit which is embodied in the duellist's character—the proud and resentful sense of injury or insult, which prompts its possessor to avenge his wounded honour by imbruining his hands in a fellow-creature's blood? Does not *this* spirit bear unequivocally the image and superscription of Satan? How can such a man presume to call himself a Christian—that is, a follower of Christ—of Him, who was divine love manifested in a human form? Is it not an insult to God, our Saviour, to profess His religion, and to bear His name, while thus trampling on His authority and His law? Listen to His express command—“If a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other.” Now, admitting that this is not to be understood *literally*, how would it be possible to reconcile the practice of duelling with its *spirit*? Does it not seem a waste of words to ask? Is the man who, for the most trifling, or even the most aggravated, affront, is ready to shed a brother's blood, acting in the *spirit* of this command of the Divine Redeemer? Again, look to the parable of the unfor-giving servant, whose import is too plain to require any comment; accompanied with that awful declaration at its close—“So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye, from *your hearts*, forgive not every one his brother their trespasses!” Does the duellist from his heart forgive his brother's trespasses against him? And if not, how fearful the doom hanging over him! How dreadful the denunciation,

that God will not forgive him his trespasses!—and if unforgiven by God, oh! what an eternity of wrath and wo awaits his unpardoned soul! Look, again, at the Lord's prayer. Mark that petition, "Forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive them that trespass against us!*" Now, conceive a duellist, who will not forgive an injury or insult, the morning before he goes to what may be the field of blood, kneeling down and offering up that prayer. How is it turned into a frightful imprecation on *his* lips—calling down the curse of an angry God on his own soul! For, as he beseeches of God to deal with him as he deals with an offending brother, whom he will not pardon, does he not virtually beseech of God even thus not to pardon him, but to pour out His vengeance upon him for his manifold offences, by thought, word, and deed, against the majesty and mercy of the Most High?

But enough, perhaps, has been said to prove that this practice is so altogether anti-christian, as being diametrically opposed both to the precepts and example of the Founder of our faith, and also to the essential spirit of His religion, that those who deliberately sanction it, as deliberately unchristianize themselves, and renounce all claims to the character, the privileges, and the hopes of the true followers of the Son of God. For is it not expressly declared, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His?" and can it be necessary to ask, if the duellist has the Spirit of Christ? Indeed, this is so universally acknowledged, that even the avowed patrons of this practice do not attempt to defend it on Christian grounds, or to prove that it is reconcilable with either the commands of Christ or the spirit of Christianity. They confess, in fact, that, in a religious point of view, it is utterly indefensible; but then they argue that it is necessary, (as if what is sinful could ever be necessary,) in order to restrain the tyrannical insolence of overbearing men—to prevent the strong from tramp-

ling on the weak—and to afford satisfaction for a class of injuries and insults, which no man of honour can allow to pass unpunished, without involving himself in an imputation of meanness and cowardice, (as if it were not the basest cowardice to do what is felt to be wrong, from the fear of man,) an imputation which, to such a man, would be far more dreadful than death itself; and that, therefore, let the consequences, for time or for eternity, be what they may, rather than incur the reproach of cowardice or meanness of spirit, by submitting to instead of avenging an insult, or refusing to accept a challenge, they will even brave the vengeance of Almighty God by an act which essentially involves the guilt both of suicide and murder, as the duellist is willing to run the risk of rushing himself, and sending a fellow-creature, unsummoned, in the act of sin, into the presence of God. Now, this exhibits a most appalling aspect of the criminality of this practice, and the one, in which that distinguished Christian patriot and philanthropist, the late lamented Wilberforce, conceived the very essence of its sinfulness to consist; and has recorded his opinion to this effect, in his invaluable “Practical View of Christianity.” He there shows that the essential guilt of this practice consists in “a deliberate preference of the favour of man before the favour and approbation of God, in *articulo mortis*, in an instance wherein our own life and that of a fellow-creature are at stake; and wherein we run the risk of rushing into the presence of our Maker, in the very act of offending Him!” (See chap. iv. section iii.) The duellist, that is, the man who either sends or accepts a challenge, by his conduct practically proves, that he values the approbation, and dreads the censure of his fellow-man, immeasurably more than he either values the favour, or fears the frown of his God. How opposite to the spirit which animated the noble reply of a Christian hero—“You know I am not afraid to

fight, but I am afraid to sin!" He virtually says, "I know that this practice is sinful in the sight of God, and exposes me to his displeasure; but still I must adopt it, because if I were to decline doing so, from a regard to the favour of God, I would forfeit, what I value infinitely more—the favour of man. I would be branded with the name of coward; and I would rather be branded with the name, and, if it must be, with the curse, of a contemptuous violator of God's holy law: I know that by this crime I am trampling on the love and the command of Him who died for me; but I prefer *this* to losing my reputation, as a man of honour, among those who despise His name. I see (I confess,) that I must choose between the censure of my fellow-worms, and the condemnation of my God and Saviour; and I am resolved to sacrifice His smiles, and brave the worst that He can inflict on me, rather than encounter the sneer of those whose approbation, as they are the enemies of God and godliness, (for it is such alone that will condemn me,) is, I must acknowledge, in reality, nothing worth." Oh! is not this, indeed, to prefer Barabbas to Jesus?

Now, just conceive a man calling himself a Christian, with this full conviction of the sinfulness of duelling on his mind, going out to the field of crime in this state; and then conceive him, (what facts * have proved to be fearfully possible,) killed in the very act of sin, without one moment allowed him for repentance! Conceive, then, his spirit in *this* state (and what ground of hope would the Scriptures war-

* What an appalling commentary on this statement is supplied by the following statistics of duelling!—172 duels fought in the reign of George the Third. 344 persons concerned in them. 69 individuals killed—in three of the cases both killed. 96 wounded—48 desperately—48 slightly. More than one-fifth lost their lives—nearly one-half wounded. 18 trials only took place—6 acquitted—7 guilty of manslaughter—3 of murder—2 of whom were executed—and 8 imprisoned, during different periods.

What a fearful exhibition in a professedly Christian country!

rant in such a case?) hurried into the presence of that God whose law he has broken, whose favour he has despised, whose vengeance he has braved! Conceive—but no!—no human imagination *can* conceive the unimaginable horrors of *such* a meeting between the soul and God, if it pass into his presence unpardoned—unpurified—self-destroyed.

Then follow this spirit, banished for ever from the presence of its insulted God; (for what hope, I repeat it, does the Gospel, rich as it is in mercy, hold out for a spirit, rushing, *uncalled* and unprepared, in the act of deliberate and unrepented sin, into the presence of its Maker?) follow it into the place of torment, where is “weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,” *for ever!* Think how the worm of remorse will there eternally gnaw that tormented spirit, with agonizing upbraidings for its *suicidal* guilt and madness, in having preferred the favour of the ungodly to the favour of God; and feared the displeasure of a worm, whose anger is utter impotence, more than the wrath of Him whose frown is hell! And then picture some fellow-sufferer in that place of torment, mocking this lost spirit’s intolerable agony by the insulting consolation—“ ‘Tis true, unhappy ruined one, thou art doomed to spend eternity in this lake of unquenchable fire; but must it not solace thy sorrows, and recompense thee for the lost favour of heaven, the sacrifice of everlasting happiness, to remember that thou art made honourable mention of on earth, as having fallen nobly on the field of honour, by those despisers of God whose approbation thou didst prefer to His?”

And then turn from the contemplation of this terrific picture to the murderer of this victim of false honour—the destroyer of this ruined soul—and look into *his* breast! Conceive, if every trace of human feeling be not extinguished there, what must be *its* agony at the thought of having, probably for some

trifling provocation, been the occasion of destroying the immortal soul of a fellow-creature, perhaps a friend, with an everlasting destruction, by sending him, with all his unpardoned sins, in the very act of rebellion against His authority, into the presence of his God!

Oh! when we look at this fearful exhibition of guilt and misery, (and it *may be fully* realized in every duel that takes place, and therefore each of the combatants is chargeable in the sight of God with it all,) can we refrain from wondering, that such a barbarous and destructive practice should have been allowed so long to disgrace the profession of Christianity in our land—that no solemn public protest against its deeply-dyed iniquity has been lifted up by the members of a Christian legislature, or the ministers of a Christian church—and that no steps have been taken, nor any measure suggested for the adoption of some specific plan, calculated to suppress a practice so insulting to God, so ruinous to man! There is another aspect (at which we have already glanced) in which the guilt of duelling may be viewed, as exhibiting a peculiar and aggravated criminality; and which cannot be better displayed than in the words of the same distinguished writer to whom we have before referred. “There is one observation,” says Mr. Wilberforce, in his Practical View, “which must not be omitted, and which seems to have been *too* much overlooked. In the judgment of that religion which requires purity of heart, and to that Being to whom, as we before remarked, ‘thought is action,’ he cannot be esteemed innocent of this crime who lives in a settled habitual determination to commit it, when circumstances shall call upon him so to do. This is a consideration which places the crime of duelling on a different footing from almost any other; indeed there is perhaps *no* other which mankind are habitually and deliberately resolved to practise, whenever the temptation shall

occur. It shows also that the crime of duelling is far more general in the higher classes than is commonly supposed, and that the whole sum of the guilt which the practice produces, is great beyond what has, perhaps, ever been conceived! It will be the writer's comfort to have solemnly suggested this consideration to the consciences of those by whom this impious practice might be suppressed. If such there be, which he is strongly inclined to believe, theirs is the crime, and theirs the responsibility of suffering it to continue."

What an awful condition is this for a professing Christian to be placed in!—Standing every moment on the brink of eternity, uncertain how soon he may be summoned into the presence of the living God, with the daily accumulating load of guilt, arising, from his deliberate intention, whenever tempted, to commit one of the most heinous sins that can provoke the displeasure of that God who is love! Is it not strange that any individual, in this most fearful state, could enjoy one moment's peace of mind, or even be able to close his eyes in sleep, from the terrifying apprehension that he should be startled out of that sleep by the summons of death, and thus plunged into that lake of unquenchable fire, where all unforgiving spirits shall be tormented in unutterable agony, for ever and ever?

In a note this eminent Christian philanthropist subjoins, that "there can be little doubt of the efficacy of what has been more than once suggested, a court of honour, to take cognizance of such offences as would naturally fall within its province. The effects of this establishment (he observes) would doubtless require to be enforced by legislative provisions, directly punishing the practice; and by discouraging at court, and in military and naval situations, all who should directly or indirectly be guilty of it."

If such a court could be established, sanctioned by adequate authority, and thus a stop were put to this most barbarous and wicked practice, what an important benefit would be conferred on mankind!—what a deep blot on the character of our national Christianity would be effaced!—what a load of crime, provoking the vengeance of God, and inflicting a fearful amount of misery on man, would be removed! Alas! how many a useful member of society has this antichristian practice cut off, in the very prime and vigour of his life! How many a once happy family has it desolated! How many a wife has it widowed! How many children made fatherless! Surely, when these considerations are joined to the more awful view of the subject, in reference to its *eternal* consequences, with which we have commenced, it may well excite our surprise and sorrow, that some more vigorous efforts have not been made by the faithful followers of a meek and forgiving Saviour, for the suppression of a practice, which so outrages the plainest precepts of His religion, so affronts His authority and example, and involves, to those who bear His name, and are chargeable with its guilt, such appalling consequences, for time and for eternity!

I am, indeed, well aware, that no power can effectually abolish this impious practice, except the power of God the Holy Ghost, enthroning a Saviour's love in the hearts of His professing followers—controlling the proud and resentful feelings of our fallen nature—subordinating the desire for man's applause to the desire for the favour of God—and constraining all who bear the Saviour's name to obey His precepts, imbibe His spirit, and follow His steps. Yes, in proportion as the meek and merciful spirit of Christianity prevails, and the example of its divine Founder is followed, will a practice so abhorrent to His nature and so hateful to His sight be

discontinued. And I would therefore, in concluding these observations, affectionately entreat all my beloved brethren in the ministry, to do all in their power, by exhibiting forcibly and frequently, in their pulpit addresses, the antichristian character and tremendous consequences of this practice, and by any other means, which, on prayerfully considering the subject, may be suggested to their minds, to wipe away this foul blot from our national character, and to dry up this fruitful source of individual misery and crime.

But while I have been thus solicitous to seize the opportunity, afforded by the consideration of the baneful influence on human happiness which the spirit of revenge exercises, to expose the enormous guilt of the practice of duelling to which it leads, I must not forget our main object, even to prove, that, independently of all the miseries which this practice brings in its train, the number of wives it has widowed, and of families it has made fatherless—the wrath of God and the ruin of soul which it involves—the passion on which it is based is in itself altogether destructive of the peace of the bosom where it reigns, and where, by establishing the dominion of Satan, it diffuses the atmosphere of hell; and, on the other hand, a meek and forgiving spirit, that, like the compassionate Redeemer, loves its enemies and prays for its persecutors, enjoys amidst the severest provocations a peace which no injuries—no affronts, however aggravated, can disturb; and which, by establishing in the soul the dominion of the Prince of Peace, diffuses there the peaceful atmosphere of heaven.

This spirit of forgivingness, which imparts such peace, the gospel at once inculcates, by its divine Founder's precept and example; and promotes, by cherishing that spirit of Christ-like love, which utterly eradicates every resentful feeling. If the in-

dividual that has injured the believer be a friend of God, who may have so far acted inconsistently with his character, still the sincere Christian, viewing him as a fellow-member of Christ, a fellow-heir of God, cannot but love him *as such*, (notwithstanding any unkindness he may receive from him,) with such love as banishes all resentment from his breast; for he cannot but love the fellow-disciple whom his dear Master and Saviour loves! But if the individual be an enemy of God, all resentful sense of the injuries inflicted on himself, is swallowed up in a Christian's heart, by pitying compassion for one who is exposed to the wrath of an offended God! He is more disposed to weep over him, in the contemplation of the everlasting ruin impending over his unpardoned soul, as the Saviour wept over the devoted city of Jerusalem, than to brood in resentful anger, over the injuries he has himself received. This turns his feelings toward his injurer into the channel of prayer for his salvation—and in the heart, where that prayer is offered up with sincerity, no resentment can abide. Besides, a grateful remembrance of *all* that his God has forgiven him—the fearful accumulation of aggravated insults against His majesty and mercy, constrains the Christian to forgive his fellow-creature the comparatively trifling insults he has received at his hands. Conscious that his divine Master has freely forgiven him ten thousand talents, he cannot hesitate to forgive a fellow-servant a few pence! When he reflects on the full import of that petition, “Forgive us, *as we forgive*,” he shudders at the thought of cherishing so much as a spark of that unforgiving spirit towards any individual, (no matter what may be the amount or aggravation of the injuries or insults received,) which would turn that petition, from a prayer for pardon, into an imprecation against his own soul. These considerations, brought with power to his heart by

the Spirit of God, breathing its dove-like serenity over his soul, keep the Christian calm and cheerful amidst provocations which would otherwise chafe his spirit into resentment, and destroy its peace.

There is in truth a serenity of spirit, enjoyed by the man whom no injuries can ruffle into resentment, which proves, most incontestably, what a friendly influence on human happiness the religion of the gospel exercises. And when we consider how manifold are the provocations, to which in such a world as this we are continually exposed, we must acknowledge of how immense importance it is, for our own peace of mind, to be possessed of a principle which can shield us from the most envenomed shafts of malice, and disarm every insult of its sting, and every provocation of its power to wound us—enabling us to maintain an unbroken composure amidst the fiercest assaults of persecution, and, like Stephen, amidst the wildest rage of infuriate foes, to look up to heaven—and be at peace! What a sublime spectacle does this proto-martyr afford! To see him surrounded by his savage persecutors, all thirsting for his blood—his poor mangled body one mass of wounds and bruises—every nerve thrilling with intensest agony! To see him at such a time lifting up his eyes in calm composure to the heaven where his beloved Saviour appeared, standing to receive his departing soul—to hear him breathing forth his spirit in prayer for the pardon of his persecutors—and thus, amidst the showers of stones, which were mangling his tortured frame, gently falling asleep in Jesus—oh! surely there is here a sublime display of the power of Christian forgiveness to keep the soul of its possessor in perfect peace, amidst the fiercest storms by which it can be assailed! How closely did this first of the martyr band tread in his divine Master's footsteps! How deeply must he have drunk into the spirit of that divine Philanthropist, who gave

in His death the most affecting illustration of His own gracious command, “Love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you!” by breathing out His soul, amidst the tortures of the cross, in a prayer for the forgiveness of His murderers!

Now, when we contrast the feelings of the heart where such a spirit of forgivingness reigns, with those of a breast where the demon of revenge has established his empire, can we for one moment doubt in which bosom true happiness can be expected to dwell? Is not the former a type of heaven, and the latter the counterpart of hell? Is not the former the throne of the Saviour, and the latter of Satan? Can it then be a matter for debate or doubt, which of these two has been chosen by happiness as her congenial abode?

There is another feature of our adorable Redeemer’s character, at which I would here briefly glance, as it has been already adverted to in the two opening chapters of this work—I mean His deep piety and devotion. Though, in His divine nature, one with the Father, co-eternal and co-equal, the Son of God, in His human nature, presents a perfect pattern of filial piety, and devotional communion with God! To fulfil the work which His heavenly Father had given Him to do—to glorify Him on the earth—this was the one great object which the Son of God continually kept in view, and primarily desired to advance, by His “obedience unto death, even the death of the cross.” And, throughout the entire of His life and ministry on earth, He maintained and exhibited an habitual sense of submission to His Father’s authority, resignation to His will, and dependence on His love and care, manifested by the most cheerful acquiescence in all His appointments, and continual communion with Him, in secret, social, and public prayer. Witness the submissive ex-

clamation—"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight!" Witness the pathetic appeal to Himself—"The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And the yet more pathetic appeal to His Father in heaven—"If this cup may not pass from me, unless I drink it, Father, not my will, but Thine be done!" And what a beautiful model of a devotional spirit did He display, in his oft-recorded rising early, and retiring to a mountain, to hold converse in prayer with His heavenly Father—in the fervency of His supplications, before appointing His apostles, or performing His miracles of mercy—and on that most affecting occasion, when, in the garden of Gethsemane, "being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly!"

Now, in all these particulars, He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. That, like Him, we should make it our aim and object to do the will, and promote the glory, of our Father in heaven—that, like Him, we should drink, with cheerful resignation, whatever cup of trial our heavenly Father puts into our hands—and that, like Him, we should never enter on any important undertaking without special supplication for divine wisdom to guide, and divine power to sustain, us in the work; and should be led, like Him, to seek in sorrow the consolations which pouring out our hearts before God will supply, and in every hour of agony, to pray more earnestly!

As in the first and second chapters I have considered the happiness that flows from loving and serving God, and in the fifth, from being cheerfully resigned to His will, I will here advert only to the happiness that flows from conformity to the Saviour's character, in its devotional features, through the channel of hallowed intercourse with God. I will touch on this the more briefly, as I have so fully expressed my sentiments on this subject in a little

work on prayer, in which I have endeavoured to describe the blessedness it imparts to a child of God!

I would observe then, here, in connexion with the immediate object of the present work, that the Christian enjoys, through the medium of a devotional frame of mind, a rich repast of spiritual pleasures, the purest, the most elevated, and the most delightful, from which the worldling, *however amiable*, (for I would think it a waste of time to consider the case of the blasphemer, the scoffer, or the openly profane,) is altogether shut out; inasmuch as no punctuality of external performances, whether in private or public worship, however scrupulously observed, can yield one particle of such pleasures to any heart, in which the love of God does not abidingly dwell, and supremely reign! Let us then glance for a moment at these pleasures. First, the pleasures of *prayer*. How sweet to a child of God to come before his Father in heaven, in the Patmos of his solitary chamber, and there pour out his every want and wish, his every solicitude and sorrow, into that Father's pitying heart!—to seek His advice in every perplexity, His protection in every danger, His support in every temptation, and His comforts in every grief!—to plead for pardon for daily deficiencies through a Saviour's atoning blood, and for strength for daily duties through the Spirit's sanctifying grace!—to thank Him for all His loving-kindnesses, (for it is indeed delightful both in private and family, as well as social and public worship, largely to mingle praise with prayer,) and to give utterance, though but as with the lisping, stammering tongue of infancy, to all the varied feelings of a contrite, yet happy—a trembling, but thankful heart! What honour that an earthly sovereign's favour could confer, is to be compared with such an audience of the King of kings! What happiness that intercourse

with the best and dearest of earthly objects can impart, can equal that which this communion with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ affords!

Then there are the pleasures which the *Word of God* supplies. What a field of enjoyment is here opened to a Christian's view! Well may it be said, that "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law does he meditate day and night!" Every announcement of his heavenly Father's will, every exhibition of his divine Saviour's love, every development of the Holy Spirit's grace, every precious promise, every holy precept, every sketch of heaven's happiness, and every glimpse of celestial glory, which that blessed Book contains, fills his heart with unutterable joy! He regards it as a treasury of unsearchable and imperishable riches, which an appropriating faith has made all his own! He feasts on the spiritual banquet there provided for him, and on the anticipation of the divine enjoyments, that will attend the celebration of the marriage supper of the Lamb! Not a character of a child of God, delineated in the page of inspiration, but yields him, in its perusal, a sacred pleasure! But, pre-eminently above all, the character of his beloved Saviour is to him a source of inexhaustible delight! He reads the blessed Book, with tears of thankful joy, as a letter of love from his Father in heaven, directed to himself; and listens to its every announcement with grateful gladness, as to the accents of that Father's voice! Nor could the tongue of man tell a believer's blessedness, when he surveys all the riches of grace and glory which the word of God reveals, and cries out, in a transport of humble, holy joy—All these are mine, for I am Christ's, and Christ is God's!

Then there are the pleasures of the *Sabbath* and the *sacramental table*. What hallowed enjoyment does the Christian feel in joining with his fellow-Christians in the worship of their common God!—

listening together to His voice, as He speaks to them in His holy word!—offering up their united supplications to the throne of grace!—blending their hearts and voices in the song of praise!—kneeling together at that table where the sacred feast is spread out, and enjoying there the sweet feeling of communion with the Lord, and with all they love in Him!—rejoicing in the consciousness that they are all one with Christ, and in Christ, while partaking together of the consecrated emblems of His broken body, and poured out blood!—anticipating the day of His glorious appearing, when they shall all sit down together at the marriage feast, provided by the everlasting Father, to grace and honour the day of the celebration of His beloved Son's espousal with His mystical bride—His blood-bought Church!

Oh! what pleasures can the worldling ever taste, to be compared with these! And what a watchful jealousy should the Christian exercise, lest indulged sin, or a spirit of carelessness or indolence, should bring a blight on these hallowed enjoyments!—lest formality should creep into his devotional exercises, and, by eating up the very vitals of their spirituality, leave them dry, sapless, and profitless, yielding neither strength nor comfort to the soul!—lest the study of the scriptures should become a burdensome task, mechanically performed, rather than a delightful recreation, cordially enjoyed!—and lest the divine ordinances of public worship, and even the sacramental table itself, should cease to be seasons of sacred and soul-reviving communion with God!

And how fervent, how persevering should the Christian be in supplication, that the Holy Spirit, whose life-giving and life-sustaining power alone can impart efficacy to these means of grace, would so accompany them all by His blessing, as to render them abundant springs of spiritual strength and refreshment to his soul!

CHAPTER X.

THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

THE last contrast, illustrated by the Saviour's character, to which I shall advert in proof of my position, is between selfishness and benevolence; and assuredly it cannot require much ingenuity or argument to prove, that the spirit of Christian benevolence exercises a more favourable influence on human happiness than the spirit of selfishness.

It is almost needless to observe, that the very essence of the Saviour's character, more especially as developed in the scheme of redemption, is love. What was it which would not allow Him to enjoy, in undisturbed tranquillity, the ineffable delight, which from eternity He had enjoyed in the bosom of the everlasting Father, but constrained Him to exchange it for a life of humiliation, sorrow, and suffering upon earth? Was it not love to man? Was it not divine philanthropy which prompted Him to undertake the gracious office of man's Redeemer, though fully aware that to accomplish the work, He must submit to pain and persecution, degradation and death? Was it not this principle of divine benevolence which both urged Him to visit our world, and marked every step of His journey through it with some fresh manifestations of his love? Was it not this which made His every miracle a miracle of mercy; and justified the beautiful compendium of His history, contained in the simple assertion, that "He went about doing good?" Was it not this which made Him delight, with such affectionate sympathy, to administer consolation to the children

of sorrow, and to pour the balm of heaven's peace into the mourning and bleeding heart? And is it not this, too, which led Him to grasp at the joy set before Him, for which He was content to endure the cross, and despise its shame, even the joy of rescuing many perishing sinners from the gulf of everlasting destruction, and bringing them safe to heaven, to be partakers through eternity of His own blessedness and glory? Yes! and will it not be this divine love in the Redeemer's breast, which will lead Him, in the day of His appearing, to rejoice with such ineffable joy, in beholding His throne encompassed by a multitude that no man could number, of glorified saints, whom He had won, as the trophies of His victory, in His conflict with Satan, in the days of His flesh; and in whose happiness, thus purchased by His own sufferings, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied?" And will not the happiness of His redeemed and glorified people supply to the Redeemer, throughout eternity, a source of such inconceivable felicity, as will abundantly repay Him (and what must be their happiness, to be an adequate recompense, *even in His estimation*) for all the shame and agonies of the cross? If these things be so, must not the Christian philanthropist, just in proportion as he is more closely assimilated to the character, enter more fully into the joy of his Lord? Must he not drink deeper draughts of divine felicity, as he drinks deeper draughts of the divine benevolence of the Lord he loves? And just as he makes his own happiness to consist in promoting the happiness, temporal and eternal, of all that come within the sphere of his influence, must he not find that such happiness as the Saviour himself felt, in accomplishing the benevolent work of redeeming love, will take up its abode in his breast?

Is it not manifest from this, that every step of advance we make in approximation to the Redeemer's

generous, self-sacrificing philanthropy, is a step of advance in approximating also to His bliss; and that if we would be partakers of a felicity such as He enjoys, we must, even as He did, in the days of His flesh, "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep?"

And if, turning from the contemplation of Jesus, as the Redeemer, we contemplate Him as the Creator, must we not be equally impressed with the conviction, that the principle of benevolence, delighting in the diffusion of happiness, must be enthroned in our hearts, and exhibited in our lives, if we would be, indeed, partakers of the felicity of God? "God is love." He delights in the impartation of happiness to those intelligent beings whom He has created, for the very purpose of filling them, out of His own fulness, with overflowing joy. And if, from the higher order of created intelligences, from the burning seraphim that surround His throne, we look to the humblest insect that creeps on the surface of the earth, we shall find the most abundant manifestations of the benignity of the Deity, developing themselves to our view on every side. Every where we are encompassed with tokens of the divine goodness, delighting to spread enjoyment over every field of contemplation to which we direct our gaze. The variegated charms which He has scattered over the scenery of nature—the sounds of gladness which salute our ears from the rejoicing inhabitants of the fields and groves—the multiplied sources of satisfaction provided for the family of man, through the medium of his senses, his intellect, and his affections—all these, independently of the stupendous displays of divine benevolence, exhibited in the scheme of redemption, and the inheritance of eternal glory, prepared for the objects of His electing grace—list up their united voices to proclaim that, "God is love"—that it is of the very essence of the divine nature

to delight in the diffusion of happiness—and that we are warranted to believe, that a large measure of the divine felicity consists in the impartation to others of a portion of its own unbounded bliss.

If creation, providence, and redemption, all thus combine their attestation to this truth, must it not be manifest, that the Christian religion, which makes it a primary part of its design to conform the character of man to that of God, in this loveliest feature of the divine image, tends most powerfully to promote the man's true happiness, by making him a partaker of the happiness of God, leading him to delight, even as God delights, in diffusing joy and gladness, as far as his influence extends; and thus, by emancipating him from the degrading bondage of selfishness, and leading him to expatriate through the multiplied fields of benevolent pleasure which Christian philanthropy opens to his view, to taste a felicity which harmonizes with the essential happiness of the blessed God, and to which an increase is continually added by every fresh accession of purified enjoyment which the benevolent spirit is instrumental in imparting to the various objects of its ministering love.

There is not, indeed, any point of view in which the religion of the gospel is seen in a more favourable aspect, as to its influence on human happiness, than when thus contemplated, as exercising its holy energies for the extirpation of the selfish and malevolent, and the cultivation of the generous and benevolent affections of our nature. The spirit of selfishness which predominates in every human heart while it continues unrenewed by divine grace, is utterly incompatible with the spirit of true happiness. It has been well said by a distinguished poet, that

“ Nature, in zeal for human amity,
Denies or damps an undivided joy.”

So long as all our desires, hopes, affections, and anxieties are concentrated on self, true felicity, such as emanates from the divine fountain above, must be a stranger to our hearts. I am well aware, that there is a rational self-love, that has nothing in common with that sinful selfishness which I would brand with reprobation. In truth, without a proper, or as I might call it Christianized self-love, there can be no true Christian benevolence; for till we have been taught to value our own souls, and earnestly to desire, and seek in God's appointed way, to secure our own eternal salvation, we cannot, in the very nature of things, feel a lively concern for the salvation of others. Now enlightened, well-directed self-love will prompt us to pursue our own everlasting happiness, as the object of primary importance to ourselves; and no benevolence deserves the name of Christian which does not prompt us to desire, and endeavour, to the very utmost extent of our influence and opportunities, to promote the everlasting happiness of others. But let once this divine principle be enthroned in our hearts—let it once become the paramount aim of our lives, from the constraining influence of the love of Christ, to labour for the advancement of the eternal welfare of those for whom He died—let that blessed Spirit, who is the Spirit of love, once take up His abode in our soul, and then a happiness is brought within our reach as much superior, in point of elevation, to what the selfish man can ever enjoy, as the heavens are higher than the earth, and, in point of purity, as the light that descends unsullied from above is purer than the fogs of this lower world.

In truth, the happiness, if one may so pervert the word, of the selfish man is contracted within a very narrow sphere, and is every moment liable to interruption and alloy from a thousand external circumstances, over which the most watchful worldly wis-

dom can exercise no control. Besides which, by making self the object, source, and centre, of all his affections and anxieties, such a character is shut out from all the pure pleasures which philanthropy imparts, and from all those ministrations to his happiness which flow from so many sources in the bosom of the benevolent man. For as every one delights to sympathize with the joys and sorrows of the benevolent, increasing the former, and mitigating the latter, by the tender offices of grateful regard; so does every one turn away with contempt and loathing from the selfish, and leave them to their solitary grief or gratification, uncomforted in the one, and ungladdened in the other, by the soothing voice or brightening smile of sympathizing affection. Nor must we forget that selfishness is closely allied with several of the most tormenting passions which disturb the peace of the human heart; for how continually is the selfish man a prey to *envy*, when he sees others more successful than himself in the pursuit of some fancied good!—to *jealousy*, when he sees others preferred to himself in the esteem or affection of those whose favour or regard, from some selfish motive, he desires!—to *anger*, when he sees the success of some favourite scheme defeated by the perfidy or carelessness of those in whom he confided; or finds himself deprived of the distinction or deference to which, in his pride, he fancied he was entitled!—to *discontent*, when he meets with providential chastisements, in the shape of afflictive dispensations, at the hand of God!—and to *resentment*, when he meets with irritating provocations, in the shape of injuries and insults, at the hands of man! Alas! on how insecure a foundation does that happiness rest which is exposed every moment to such tempestuous gusts, by any one of which the tottering fabric must be dashed to the ground! How miserable is the man whose peace of mind is

thus at the mercy of innumerable casualties, as the world calls them, which he can neither foresee nor prevent! What a mockery, in a world like this, to talk of the happiness of a spirit which is liable every moment to be corroded by envy, maddened by jealousy, inflamed with anger, soured by discontent, and imbittered by resentment! Yet *such* is the only happiness that can be tasted by the spirit of the selfish man. Now, contrast with this the happiness which the benevolent spirit, animated by Christian love, enjoys. It is free from *envy*, for the Christian feels too happy in the smile of God to have the least temptation to envy any fellow Christian's bliss—from *jealousy*, for he knows he has exactly the measure of every desirable good which infinite wisdom sees to be best for him; and therefore he can cheerfully contemplate the superior gifts or attainments of those whom the same infinite wisdom has placed in apparently a more favoured position than himself—from *anger*, because he has learned of Him who was meek and lowly of heart, and is enabled, like his gentle and loving Master, amidst the most galling irritations, to keep his soul in perfect peace—from *discontent*, because he knows that a covenant-God has promised to make all things work together for his eternal good, and therefore is contentedly satisfied with every appointment of His fatherly hand—and from *resentment*, because he feels such compassion for his persecutors, such a yearning desire for their everlasting happiness, that he is utterly incapable of harbouring one resentful feeling towards them in his breast. How secure, then, is the happiness which the benevolent spirit enjoys, since, coming, as it does, direct from God, nothing on earth can intercept it; or prevent it from pouring its streams of celestial blessedness into the heart where that God who is love has taken up His abode! Besides, the happy-

ness of the benevolent man is continually deriving, as we have before observed, fresh accessions from the happiness of every object of its affectionate ministrations. It participates in the enjoyment which it is instrumental in imparting; nor is it possible for a Christian philanthropist to make others happy without thereby becoming happier himself. Yes; there is not a smile that he kindles on another's cheek which does not light up a reflected lustre on his own. There is not a thrill of joy that he awakens in another's heart, which does not give birth to a corresponding throb of gladness in his own; nor a tear of a fellow-mourner that he wipes away without feeling a soothing balm, blended with the sorrows of his own soul. Thus are the sources of his bliss as multiplied as the objects of his benevolence; and every fresh labour of love in which he is engaged sends another tributary stream of purest pleasure, to swell the full tide of God-like felicity which the spirit of Christian philanthropy has poured into his heart. What must have been the happiness of the philanthropic Howard, when, on visiting the prisoner's cell, like an angel of mercy, he saw the gloom of the dungeon brightened to the eyes of its wo-worn inmates by the smile of Christian love, compassionating their misery, and heard their groans exchanged for the grateful blessings of thankful hearts! What must have been the joy of the sainted Wilberforce when he beheld the glorious recompence of years of toil in the bursting of the negro's bonds; and a voice was wafted on his ear from distant lands, proclaiming that the slave was free, and breathing over him the benediction of emancipated millions, whom he had rescued from the darkest and most degrading bondage into the light and liberty of freedom's sons! When did selfishness, though pampered to the uttermost by every indulgence that wealth can purchase or luxury

invent, ever taste a joy like this! But it is pre-eminently when Christian philanthropy labours for the salvation of immortal souls, that she reaps her most glorious reward, and enjoys her brightest bliss. Oh! to be the instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit of making even one fellow-sinner acquainted with a Saviour's preciousness—of lighting up on his cheek *that* smile which tells that the peace of God resides within—of opening to his view the only hope that maketh not ashamed—the hope of glory, the only prospect that death cannot darken—the prospect of an eternity of inconceivable blessedness! Is there not in this a joy which the language of earth is altogether inadequate to describe—a joy whose possessor may indeed be said to "enter into the joy of the Lord," for it is a joy akin to that which was set before *Him* in heaven, for whose attainment He was content to "endure the cross, despising its shame?" "Are not ye my glory and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus?" says St. Paul to his beloved converts, who had been brought, by the divine blessing on his ministrations, to the saving knowledge of a crucified Redeemer. And such a crown of rejoicing will be the portion of every faithful missionary and minister, yea, and of every private Christian too, who is animated and actuated by a glorious ambition to win many souls to Christ, and as having turned *many* to righteousness, to shine as the stars, for ever and ever.

Strange, is it not surpassingly strange, that with *such* a motive to stimulate their zeal, those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and who know, by their own experience, the sweetness of His love, and the preciousness of his salvation, should not be more zealous in the God-like work of winning souls to Christ! Strange that they should ever rest satisfied, till they have used every exertion within their

reach—every means, which they can ask the Spirit of love to bless, to bring every unconverted relative and friend to the saving knowledge of Him in whom their own souls have found such satisfying peace and joy, and with whom they hope to spend an eternity of bliss and glory! How, how can they be contented to enjoy their own hope of salvation, without straining every nerve to make all they love—yea, all they are acquainted with—partakers of that blessed hope! How can they bear the thought of travelling heavenward themselves, and leaving any one beloved object—yea, any one fellow-immortal, whom they could hope to influence, to wander in the way that leadeth to everlasting destruction! How can they delight themselves in the possession of God's favour now, and the prospect of His glory hereafter, without at the same time persevering, zealously and unweariedly, in the use of every appointed means—the most fervent prayers, the most affectionate expostulations, the most faithful remonstrances, the most urgent appeals, by which they may be warranted to cherish the consolatory hope of being the favoured instruments, through the divine power of the Holy Spirit, of drawing those they love, who are as yet strangers to Christ, to the foot of His cross! How is it that the thought of what unutterable joy it would pour into their own hearts, if God should *so* bless their labours of love, does not more powerfully constrain them to abound in self-denying, unwearied exertions for the accomplishment of *such* an object! Oh! to look on a beloved relative, and say—God made me the instrument of imparting the knowledge which brings with it all the blessedness that flows from the love of Christ, to that loved one's soul; and then to anticipate the bliss of seeing that dear object of your heart's affections, as a glorified spirit, a fellow-sharer of your joy in the Saviour's presence in heaven; and hearing the voice you so

loved in life to listen to joining with yours in the song of praise to the Lamb; and to feel that *this, this* is the recompense of your faithful labours of love—oh! what joy can be compared to this; and what energy, what zeal, what perseverance should it inspire in striving to win souls to Christ! Were this consideration felt, as it ought to be, by every Christian's heart, what self-denying exertions, what liberal contributions, what generous sacrifices, what earnest prayers, would it call forth in the Saviour's cause! What missionary society would be allowed to lauguish for want of funds, when this principle would pour such a full tide of wealth into the treasury of every missionary institution! How would a flame of missionary zeal be kindled in many a Christian's heart, to such an extent as would constrain him to go and proclaim a Saviour's love in heathen lands! What an intense interest would be felt and manifested on behalf of every exertion, making either at home or abroad, among the ancient people of God, or the benighted heathen, for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom! And what an avoiding or curtailing of superfluities, in every article of domestic or personal expenditure, would be practised, to enable the benevolent heart to enjoy the luxury of contributing largely to the mitigation of human misery, and the increase of human happiness, through the medium of the wide-spread diffusion of that Gospel, which supplies the only effectual antidote to the ills of life, the only unfailing source of satisfying happiness on earth, and the only infallible guide to the glories of eternity! How watchful too would every real Christian be to seize every auspicious opportunity for pleading with beloved relatives and friends the cause of their own souls, and beseeching them to accept the invitations of a Saviour's love! How would the time, now too often wasted in indolence or frivolity, be redeemed for the

noblest of all employments—the duties of a faithful and devoted ambassador of Christ, (for every sincere Christian should regard himself as such,) zealous for his Divine Master's honour, and seeking to persuade all around to bow, in grateful allegiance, beneath the sceptre of a Saviour's grace! How often would the precious theme of that Saviour's love be heard from the hallowed lips, which have been touched and purified by a living coal from the altar, on which the Son of God sacrificed Himself for the salvation of man! And with what vigilance would the faithful servant of the Lord watch every movement he made, every temper he manifested, every word he uttered, lest he should inadvertently put a stumbling-block in the way of others, and by any inconsistency on his part deter them from embracing a Saviour's cause!

What a tender solicitude also would be felt, that His cause might be successfully advocated by the most powerful and persuasive of all modes of preaching Christ, and recommending His Gospel, even by such a visible conformity to His image, in all its lovely features, as appeals to every heart, with the almost irresistible eloquence of a heavenly character, and a holy life!

Now, if the principle of Christian philanthropy thus reigned, with paramount ascendancy, in every believer's breast, prompting this unwearied perseverance in every labour of love for the happiness of all to whom his influence can through any channel extend, would not his own happiness be advanced, in the highest attainable degree, by his aim and object in life being thus continually and closely identified with that which drew down the Son of God from the Throne of His glory in heaven—which animated His every word and work, during the period of His pilgrimage on earth—and which still engages His heart and voice, in His intercession on

behalf of His people, now that He is ascended to the right hand of the majesty on high? Must not this identification of purpose with the Saviour's impart the purest and most exalted enjoyment to His devoted servant's heart? Must not every effort he makes for a fellow-creature's salvation, whether crowned with success or not, redound to his own happiness, by making him feel that he is, in this glorious work, in the sphere of his humble instrumentality, a fellow-labourer with the Lord he loves? But who can describe his joy when his labours *are* crowned with the success which his soul so ardently covets, and he sees some fellow-sinner rescued from the roaring lion's jaws, through his exertions, and safely sheltered, for time and for eternity, in the good Shepherd's fold! Oh! surely *they* have yet to learn what true happiness means, who do not know that its most congenial habitation here below is that Christian's breast, (which is indeed the temple of the Holy Ghost,) who is privileged to see such a recompense of his labours of love; and to feel that he is not merely blest himself with all the fulness of joy which the smile of a covenant-God can bestow, but also made a blessing to others, who will love him as their best earthly benefactor, and thank God for all the blessedness he has been instrumental in imparting to them, and this not merely while fellow-pilgrims in this vale of tears, but when resting and rejoicing together on Mount Zion, through the endless ages of a blissful eternity!

Before finally parting from this proof of the favourable influence which the religion of the Gospel exercises on human happiness, by establishing in the heart the dominion of Christian benevolence, I observe, that while the highest enjoyment which this celestial principle can impart, unquestionably is derived from the labours of love which it prompts, on behalf of the salvation of immortal souls, still it

is the delightful privilege of the truly benevolent character to be continually deriving pure pleasure from a thousand subordinate sources, to which the selfish character never can have access. Not merely does the man of Christian benevolence increase the amount of his own happiness, by appropriating, as it were, all the happiness which he is instrumental in imparting to others, and which, by participation, he makes his own; but he actually can add an accession to his own enjoyment from all the felicity, which, though not in the way of his promoting, he either witnesses, or knows to exist, in any region of the boundless universe of God. By this means he shares in the bliss of all the inhabitants of heaven, while he meditates in rapturous vision on all the happiness which those blessed beings enjoy, who always live and rejoice in the light of the countenance of a present God. By this means he shares in the bliss of all on earth, who are walking by faith in the footsteps of the Son of God, and with His peace in their hearts, and His smile on their path, are rejoicing in the light of His love, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost. He cannot see a fellow-Christian in the visible possession of that "peace which passeth all understanding," and imparts that joy "which is unspeakable and full of glory," without becoming a partaker of his joy. He cannot witness the pure enjoyment which thrills through the bosom of an attached and happy family, lighting up every countenance in the dear domestic circle with the smile of love, and filling every heart with the glow of gladness, without so identifying himself with every rejoicing member of the group,—catching, as it were, by the power of sympathy, the infection of the atmosphere of bliss, which breathes around him, that the happiness of all that encircle him becomes in a measure his own; and he feels, by delightful experience, how sweet it is to comply with the apostolical

injunction which exhorts him to "rejoice with them that do rejoice," for he finds that by so doing he is himself replenished with the purest joy.

Yea, and further still—the contemplation of the happiness even of the animal creation imparts pleasure to a benevolent heart. When the benevolent man walks through the fields of nature, in the glad-some spring, when all around is awaking from the sleep of winter to re-animated life, and the spirit of joyousness is abroad, how readily does his bosom respond to the voice of gladness that salutes his ear on every side—and his spirit within him sympathizes with the spirit of the season, and joins in nature's song of cheerfulness and praise. There is not a warbler that pours forth its thrilling melody, in the overflowings of a joy so exhilarating that it cannot keep silence, but tunes his heart to a responsive joy. There is not a rejoicing creature in the wide-spread scenery around them, from the sprightly courser that flies across the field in uncontrollable buoyancy of spirit, to the fluttering insect that dances gaily in the sunbeam, which does not send a thrill of gladness into his benevolent breast. He delights to contemplate these unanswerable demonstrations of the benignity of the Creator. He luxuriates in the enjoyment of these convincing proofs, that the government of the world is in the hands of a Being who rejoices in the diffusion of happiness. And while from all that meets his view, or salutes his ears, he seems to hear a voice which testifies that "God is love"—his spirit becomes so attuned to the Spirit of God, that he drinks in the purest pleasure from every sight and sound of gladness of which our world (clouded and saddened as it has been by the fall) is still so full.

Now surely when we cast a retrospective glance at what we have thus exhibited in the way of contrast, between the passions and principles which

Christianity eradicates, and those which she implants; and especially between the spirit of selfishness and the spirit of Christian benevolence—when we contemplate the contracted sphere within which the enjoyments of the one are confined, and the boundless range of blessedness through which the other expatiates—the tormenting passions to which the one is allied, and the godlike affections with which the other is linked—the solitary channel in which the unhallowed gratification of the one flows, and the ten thousand tributary streams from the joys of all the happy creatures in heaven and on earth that are continually swelling the full tide of the holy happiness of the other—surely we cannot hesitate to acknowledge, that by implanting and cherishing the spirit of Christian benevolence as a master-passion of the Christian's heart, a reigning principle of the Christian's life, the Gospel does indeed, in the fullest degree, promote the true happiness of man.

And here, before closing this very imperfect sketch of those features of the Saviour's character, conformity to which tends so directly to the advancement of human happiness, one might advert to other most attractive ones—such as that unspotted purity which shrank with the instinctive recoil of perfect holiness from the defiling touch of sin—that constant self-denial which is so touchingly alluded to in the affecting exclamation of the apostle, “He pleased not Himself”—that unswerving love of truth which would not stoop (were it to gain the whole world) to the guilt of falsehood or the meanness of equivocation—that uncompromising fidelity which no temptation could induce to betray a trust, no danger deter from discharging a duty—that unquenchable zeal for the glory of God which boldly rebuked the hypocrisy and pride of the Scribes and Pharisees, and which no difficulties could damp, no

sufferings check, no terrors chill—combined with that patient endurance of personal insult which when He was reviled, reviled not again, but opposed meekness to wrath, and silence to imprecation—that exquisite tenderness of filial affection, and that exalted tone of generous disinterestedness which made the Son of God in His human nature, the loveliest pattern of a son, and of a friend! All these I might advert to; and show, in regard to each, that just in proportion as any character more closely resembled the Redeemer's, it would in that very proportion, advance in the path of true happiness. But as this would lead me to too great a length, and several of these features have been, or will be, incidentally alluded to, I would rather close with *that* feature to which we have in this chapter adverted—that feature in which the very essence of His nature and character consists, and conformity to which is so essential for the participation of His happiness—His generous, devoted, self-sacrificing love!

Study, dear Christian reader, study the Saviour's character, more especially in this, its most attractive aspect. Seek to imbibe, above all, His spirit of overflowing love! Let your every look be illumined by its radiance—your every word be attuned to its tenderness—your every temper be cast in its mould—and your every action regulated by its laws! Let love like His be the very soul of your soul—the animating and presiding spirit in which you live, and move, and have your being!

Such love is, indeed, the fulfilling of the law. It will lead you to delight, as He did, in all those little offices of kindness, by which you may minister to the comfort and happiness of the members of the domestic or social circle, as well as to labour unweariedly for the salvation of their immortal souls! It will lead you, like Him, to sympathize in all the sorrows of the children of affliction, and to feel such

sweet pleasure, as He did, in “wiping away the orphan’s tears, and making the widow’s heart to sing for joy!” It will lead you, when meeting with unjust and unkind reproaches or irritating insinuations, like Him, to receive them with meek silence, or to reply to them with the “soft answer which turneth away wrath.” It will lead you, like Him, when wounded by the want of sympathy in your sorrows on the part of those friends in whom you have trusted, and to whom you have looked for comfort in your hour of affliction, to invent some extenuating excuse for their unkindness—to say—“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak!”

Oh! such a temper as this will make you blessed in yourself, and a blessing to all around! Breathing yourself in an atmosphere of love, you will diffuse that atmosphere wherever you go! Your presence will have a tranquillizing and a gladdening influence in whatever circle of society you move! Many a mistake which has alienated friends will you rectify—many a family breach repair! And when you see friends reconciled, and families re-united, through the blessing of the God of peace on your mediation, you will understand what the Prince of Peace meant when He said—“Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God!”

Dear Christian reader, will you not strive to realize all the beauty and blessedness of such a character as this? Oh! then, be much in contemplation of the Saviour’s. Study it carefully. Watch its every movement. Gaze with intense scrutiny on its every feature. Follow Him from place to place. Mark His deportment in every situation. Strive to catch, as it were, the very expression of His countenance—the very tone of His voice. Often view Him in those scenes where all the tenderness of His character is displayed;—folding the infants in his arms—

weeping over His beloved Jerusalem, or at the grave of Lazarus—comforting the widow of Nain—domesticated with the family of Bethany—pouring out His soul, even when the hour of His agony was just at hand, in words of comfort and prayer for support for those very disciples who, at the moment He was thus engaged, He knew would all forsake Him, in His deep distress. Picture Him turning and looking on Peter with that overpowering look of reproachful love; or, in the garden of Gethsemane, suggesting a merciful excuse for His disciples' sleep; or sending that message of love—“Tell my brethren, tell *Peter* ;” or asking that apostle, who had thrice denied Him, the heart-touching question—“Lovest thou Me?” or parting from His beloved disciples in the act of blessing them! Who can think of all this, and forbear to join in the exclamation of the pious Doddridge—“Compassionate Saviour, who would not love Thee?” Think, too, of the test He gave, by which all men were to know His disciples—“By *this*, if ye have love one to another;” and how beautifully it was displayed in the primitive church, when even the heathen were constrained admiringly to cry out—“Behold how these Christians love one another!” Read over and over His prayer for unity among all that love Him, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of St. John. Remember *when* that prayer was offered up! Let the gospel and epistles of the beloved disciple be frequently perused. Study the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Study it in your closet. Study it on your knees; till the very spirit of it is infused into your soul, and all your feelings, and words, and actions, are fully impregnated with that charity, that divine love, without which all other gifts and graces, howeversplendid or dazzling in the eyes of man, in the sight of God —are *nothing* worth.

But, above all, remember, that in every effort to

attain to conformity to the Saviour's character, you will meet the most determined opposition from that malignant enemy of your soul who, in his fiendish hatred, dreads nothing more than to see you advancing in resemblance to the Redeemer's image; and will, therefore, employ all his subtlety, as the wily serpent, and all his strength, as the roaring lion, to hinder your progress. He cares comparatively little what advances you may make in head-knowledge or lip-service; but heart-religion—practical godliness—real conformity to the Saviour's character, *this* he does dread, because he knows, by his own experience, that this alone can promote either your true happiness or the glory of your God. To hinder this he will adopt every method that the ingenuity of his subtle mind, aided by the resources of his mighty intellect, and the experience of above six thousand years, can suggest. He will watch every spark of corruption in your heart, and strive to fan it into a flame. He will adapt his temptations to your besetting sin, to foster it into full development; and thus sully the Saviour's image in your soul, and rob it of its purity, peace, and joy. He will endeavour to bring a blight on all the means of grace, by breathing a spirit of formality over all the divine ordinances. He will seek to induce you to engage in prayer with heartlessness; to read the scriptures with inattention; to listen to the word preached in a critical and cavilling spirit; to attend the services of the Sabbath without prayerfulness or profit; and even to approach the sacramental table without deepened desire for, or delight in, devout communion with the Lord. Or, if he cannot succeed in this, he will try an opposite plan. If he cannot make you neglect the means of grace, he will strive to make you overvalue them, by substituting them in the Saviour's place, regarding them as fountains of living water in themselves, instead of merely

channels through which the Holy Spirit conveys the communications of his grace from the divine and inexhaustible fountain above. He will endeavour to enlist into his service your dearest friends; provide suitable snares for every faculty; and mix his poison with every spiritual gift and grace. He will convey his temptations through the channels which you least suspect, and which will give them the greatest influence. He will strive to pollute the imagination, to sensualize the appetites, to bewilder the reason with perplexing difficulties in the deep things of God, and to cloud the understanding with darkened views of divine truth; to inflame the passions into uncontrollable excitement, and to pervert the judgment into an erroneous estimate of the claims of conflicting duties, and the character of questionable pleasures and pursuits; to suggest hard thoughts of God, or high thoughts of yourself; in a word, to excite every sinful, and to chill every gracious affection. He will endeavour to urge every Christian virtue to a sinful extreme—to push humility into distrust, and confidence into presumption; circumspection into cowardice, and decision into dogmatism; prudence into parsimony, and generosity into profusion. He will strive to mingle bitterness with your zeal, if he cannot damp it; and if he cannot check your charity, to spoil it by ostentation—to turn your cheerfulness into levity, and your seriousness into gloom—to make devotedness and mortification minister to self-righteousness, and spirituality itself to feed spiritual pride. If you are of a softer temperament, he will seek to entice you into voluptuousness—if of a tenderer, into idolatrous attachment—if of a warmer, into enthusiasm or bigotry—if of a sterner, into ambition or revenge. He will furnish appropriate excitements for every sinful desire, and pursue you with his vile suggestions into every situation and scene. In society or solitude,

in business or recreation, in meditation or reading, in secular or in spiritual occupations, you are alike exposed to his assaults. And above all, he will delight to persuade you into the indulgence, or to provoke you into the exhibition, of tempers and dispositions at variance with the Spirit of Christ, because he will thus at once lead you to destroy your own peace of mind, and to dishonour the Saviour that you love. And when he sees you thus indulging or displaying a proud or an impure, an ambitious or an envious spirit, or hears you using uncharitable, unkind, or any form of unchristian expressions, with what fiendish malignity will this accursed spirit rejoice !

Only think into what sins Satan *has* seduced the children of men—ay, and even the children of God, in every age !

It was he who seduced (we have reason¹ to believe) his fellow-angels into rebellion against the authority of God ; and our first parents into disobedience to that sole command on which hung suspended the destiny of the human race. It was he who seduced Cain into shedding a brother's blood —Noah into drunkenness—Abraham into equivocation—Jacob into falsehood—the Patriarchs into envy—David into adultery and murder—Saul into suicide — Solomon into idolatry—Hezekiah into vain-glory ; and made the history of God's favoured people a continued history of rebellion, ingratitude, idolatry, and crime. And under the Christian dispensation, how fearful are the examples of the crimes he has prompted, and the ruin he has wrought ! It was he who tempted the Jewish people to reject their own Messiah, and their priests and rulers to imbrue their hands in his blood. It was he who prompted the appalling cry, “Crucify Him — crucify Him !”—and the fearful choice, “Not this man, but Barabbas !” It was he who tempted the apostles to de-

sire earthly pomp, and to dispute about pre-eminence—who persuaded them all to forsake, and Peter to deny, the Saviour—Judas to betray the Son of man, and then in despair to plunge into hell—and Ananias to lie to the Holy Ghost. In a word, all the inconsistencies in character and conduct that disfigure the Christian, and all the corruptions and divisions that defile and distract the Church, may be traced to the agency of this Evil Spirit, acting on the depravity of our fallen nature;—whether it be the self-righteousness of Pharisaism, or the ungodliness of Antinomianism; whether that awful heresy which denies the divinity and atonement of the Son of God, and the personality and Godhead of the Holy Spirit; or that (as we doubt not Satan himself regards it)—that master-piece of Satanic skill, Popery, which (oh! surpassing proof of his power!) he is now successively urging some even of her own ministers to introduce into the very bosom of our scriptural church, which has recorded in her articles the most solemn protest against its soul-destroying errors; and on whose portals is legibly written the inscription, “No peace with Rome!”

Oh! think, believer, what must be the subtlety and the permitted power of Satan, when he has been enabled to accomplish *such* a work as this! Ay, and as he dared to tempt the Son of God himself, in the days of his flesh, to fall down and worship him, so will he dare, when loosed from prison, after the thousand years of his confinement, to renew, with unabated rage, his impious assaults against the camp of the saints, the beloved city; and to lead on the kings of the earth to the battle against the Lord God Almighty! With this tremendous antagonist, this god of this world, as in scripture he is styled, you have to contend in your spiritual warfare. Yes, you have to wrestle not merely with “flesh and blood,” your own innate corruption, and your sin-

ful fellow-men, but also “with principalities and powers” of indeed appalling subtlety and strength. With them you must contest every inch of ground, in striving for the prize of your high calling, in Christ Jesus, even a perfect conformity to his divine character. Surely, then, if you do indeed desire to be victorious in this conflict—if you would ever hope to reflect your Redeemer’s image, in the beauty of perfect holiness, you cannot but feel convinced that you must take the whole armour of God.* Especially you must use the weapon which your Divine Master used in his conflict with Satan on the mount of temptation, “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” You must wield this courageously, in the strength of the Captain of your salvation. You must “watch and pray,” lest you be insnared by the subtlety of your wily adversary,† and so enter into temptation. And above all, you must ever remember that you can only conquer by having Omnipotence enlisted on your behalf; since, from Satan’s strength, and your own helplessness, in carrying on this process of assimilation to the divine character, a power superior to Satan’s is indispensably required. While, therefore, you employ, faithfully and diligently, all the means I have

* The Christian warrior will find most valuable directions, as to the use of this armour, in Gurnall’s excellent work on the subject; and a precious extract from Simeon’s works, entitled, “The Christian’s Armour.”

† What a fearful view of this adversary and his incessant watchfulness for our destruction is presented in the following extract from Simeon’s “Christian’s Armour!”

“The very instant we begin to seek heavenly things, all hell is in alarm. If we begin to listen to the word of God, he will send some emissary, some child of his, whom he has endued with peculiar subtlety, to turn us from the faith. If the word, like good seed, be sown upon our hearts, he will send a host of devils, like birds of the air, to pick up the seed. If any, in spite of his efforts, take root in our hearts, he will instantly sow tares to grow up with the wheat, and thorns to choke it. We cannot go into the presence of God to pray, but ‘Satan will be at our right hand to resist us.’”

pointed out, if ever you would succeed, be earnest, be unwearied in prayer, that the power of the Holy Spirit (which alone can vanquish Satan's) may abidingly rest upon you; and, by imparting to you his own nature, make you indeed like-minded with Christ. It is only by this blessed Spirit taking up his abode in your heart, and bringing all its affections under his sweet influence, that you can be conformed in love to the character of the Son of God. This Spirit must make your inmost soul his shrine, must sway his sceptre over every passion, every principle that rules within, if you would, indeed, in the happiest sense of the words, be "one with Christ." It is only in the bosom where this dove-like Spirit dwells that such love as dwelt in the Saviour's bosom can abide. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love. All his names, all his characters, all his offices, bespeak him such. His titles, what are they? The Spirit of peace, of consolation, of joy—the Comforter. His fruits, what are they? Joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, love. His office, what is it? To train you up as a child of a God of love—to make you the recipient and reflector of a Saviour's love—to prepare you for a world of everlasting love. Oh! love this Spirit with a pure heart, fervently. Cherish his gentle influences. Listen to his softest whispers. Trace his footsteps in the word of God, where his inspiration breathes in every line. Treasure up the precepts on this point which he has there recorded, and which he alone can enable you to obey. "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love. Be followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave

you, so also do ye." Beseech of the Holy Spirit to adorn you with these lovely graces, to give you the genuine stamp of Christ's disciples, legibly impressed on all you think, and say, and do. Never study the Saviour's character without special prayer that the Holy Spirit will conform yours to his, in *all* its divine features.

Walk in the Spirit—in the fellowship of the Spirit. Beware of provoking him. He is a pure Spirit. Shun all polluting indulgences, if you would have him to dwell in your soul. Nothing more grieves the Holy Spirit, or unfits the soul for communion with a *holy* God, than the indulgence of impure thoughts or desires. "Blessed are the *pure* in heart, for *they* shall see God." He is the Spirit of peace. The harbouring of angry passions will drive him away. His still small voice cannot be heard amidst the storms of passions; therefore "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." He is a loving Spirit. He will not dwell in a heart where unkindness, and hatred, and envy, and jealousy are allowed to reside. If you wish *him* as your guest, you must banish *these*; or rather, you must beseech of him, by his almighty power, to drive them out. Thus honour this Spirit by dependence on his power, by obedience to his suggestions, by prayer for his grace, and by habitual fellowship with him, in all the ordinances he has appointed, and all the paths he has prescribed; and then may you hope, that through his omnipotent energy, your character will every day become more closely assimilated to the Saviour's; and consequently, your happiness every day become more closely identified with his, while heaven will appear more and more attractive in your

eyes, from the delightful anticipation that *there*, “seeing him as he is, face to face, you shall be like him”—your resemblance to the Redeemer’s image, unsullied by a single stain of sin, reflected, in all the beauty of perfect holiness, without the least distortion or defilement, in the pure mirror of your glorified soul !

CHAPTER XI.

CHRISTIAN CHEERFULNESS.

THE fifth ground on which I propose to rest the proof of the claims of the gospel to be considered as the patroness of true happiness, is, that it sanctifies and thus sweetens every source of rational pleasure; and forbids only those indulgences, which are at once disgraceful in themselves, and destructive of the real welfare and happiness of mankind, both temporal and eternal.

In entering on this part of our subject, I would consider it an insult on the understanding of my readers, to engage in any laboured or lengthened train of reasoning to prove that the religion of the gospel is not unfriendly to human happiness, because it discourages, by the most awful denunciations of the divine displeasure, drunkenness, debauchery, and all those polluting and debasing gratifications, which degrade man, originally created in the image of God, immeasurably below the level of the beasts that perish. Surely it were worse than a waste of time to spend any portion of it in deliberate proof, that true happiness cannot be the portion of the brutalized drunkard; who, with suicidal hand, has

blotted out from his soul every lingering trace of the divine image, in which man at first was formed; and who, whether in the disgusting absurdities of the idiot, or the diabolical ravings of the maniac, presents perhaps the most contemptible and loathsome spectacle that degraded humanity can display! Nor would it be a more profitable employment of our time, to expend it in any laborious process of demonstration, that happiness, in any worthy sense of the word, cannot be the inmate of that breast where there burns the fire of lust. For whatever may be the grovelling gratifications, in which this accursed passion prompts its unhallowed victim to indulge, they must be attended with consequences, so necessarily destructive of all true peace of mind, all rational and elevated enjoyment, that, even were there no future hell of endless torments, the wretch who is enslaved to the lusts of the flesh, must carry within him a hell from whose tormenting power he cannot by any efforts escape. The consciousness of self-degradation, that inflicts on him the bitter anguish of self-contempt, which, though he may conceal, he cannot stifle—the fear of future punishment, which, though he may brave, he cannot extinguish—the alienation of the affections of all the good—the disgraceful distinction of being claimed as a kindred spirit by all the abandoned—a diseased body—an enfeebled mind—an accusing conscience—an angry God—the tyranny of tormenting passions, which indulgence only inflames—the agony of remorse—and a death-bed of despair—such are the fearful concomitants of what is called a life of pleasure! Such are the legible tokens of the wrath of God, by which He has stamped His curse on the sinful indulgence of the lusts of the flesh! And is it needful then to prove, that those who are thus branded with His curse, cannot be truly happy—or that the path on which His frown so darkly falls,

cannot lead to true and satisfying enjoyment? No! no! The slave of sensual lusts must be miserable, whatever form the sinful indulgence of unhallowed desire may assume—whether that of the cold-blooded seducer, who, not content with blighting the temporal welfare of his confiding victim, murders her immortal soul, and plunges her into the abyss of a ruined eternity—or that of the reckless debauchee, who riots in the unutterable abominations of unrestrained libertinism, till his very look is licentiousness, and his very breath is pollution, and his loathsome body becomes a charnel-house of corruption—or that of the heartless adulterer, who, for his own vile gratification, is content to inflict on his fellow-man the deadliest injury in his power to perpetrate; to drag the victim of his accursed passion with himself into the gulf of infamy and eternal wo; and to destroy the happiness of a family where, but for his diabolical depravity, peace might have reigned undisturbed! Oh! is it to be supposed, that such base, and cruel, and perfidious characters as these can enjoy one moment of true happiness? Is it to be supposed, that a righteous God will permit them, with an untrembling step, and a heart at peace within itself, to brave His vengeance, while treading the path of such complicated guilt, which is leading them to that lake of fire where, if they perish in their sins, He will repay them for all their daring affronts to His laws, with an eternity of well-merited wrath and wo? Let one testimony on this subject suffice. The celebrated Colonel Gardiner tried the experiment of finding happiness in such gratifications, under circumstances the most favourable—and, in the estimation of his companions in profligacy, so successfully, that he was distinguished by the title of “the happy rake.” Yet afterwards, when by a miracle of divine grace, he was recovered from his sinful career, he confessed

to Doctor Doddridge, that at the very time *he* was thus *envied* by his companions, he himself envied the very *brutes* that perish; for that once, while he was thus congratulated on his success, on seeing a dog come into the room, he said to himself—“*Oh, that I were that dog!*” Is not this testimony sufficient to prove the truth of that solemn declaration of Jehovah—“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked?” And assuredly the seducer, the adulterer, the debauchee, are pre-eminently such. And if their torments be often so intolerable even here, what will they be in a world where these accursed passions will rage with uncontrolled fury, burning with an unsatiable desire for gratification, which can never be obtained; and scorching the lost soul with a fiery thirst, that never can be quenched? Oh! what indescribable, what inconceivable agony, will the unceasing torture of tyrannizing passions inflict, fearfully aggravated by the taunts, sneers, and scoffings of the evil spirits that seduced them into sin!

Leaving, then, all these, and all similar sources of debasing and polluted gratification, out of the question, as altogether unworthy even of a rational, not to say an enlightened and spiritual taste, we would fearlessly fling abroad a challenge to the enemy of Christianity, and defy him to produce a single source of enjoyment, which even reason, independently of revelation, would sanction, and yet which the gospel forbids. Yea! farther, we would defy him to produce one which the gospel does not explicitly sanction—and, even more, by sanctifying, additionally sweeten. So that it is not saying too much, to say, that the Christian beats the worldling hollow even on his own ground—that is, in reference to those enjoyments of which the Christian and the worldling partake in common. For it is beyond all controversy, that the Christian has a

much sweeter enjoyment than the worldling, even of those pleasures which are equally within the reach of both—independently of those immeasurably more exalted and satisfying pleasures, of which we have already spoken, as the exclusive portion of the children of God. Many circumstances concur to give the Christian this advantage over the worldling, in the enjoyment even of those pleasures of which both can alike partake. There is the feeling of gratitude to God, as their Giver, which infuses a large measure of additional sweetness into them all, with him who receives them as the tokens of a Father's love. There is the smile of a beloved Saviour, which gilds with additional brightness every scene of purified earthly bliss.

There is the consciousness, that those inferior pleasures, which are all so liable to casualty, declension, and decay—so exposed to innumerable perils—and the tenure of whose possession is so deplorably insecure, are not the chief sources of the Christian's happiness; so that he may lose them all, and yet not lose the essential elements of his highest enjoyment, which, as it comes direct from God, cannot be intercepted or alloyed by any of the accidents or afflictions of this lower world.

I dwell the more willingly on this view of our subject, because I know of what importance it is, especially to the young, not to have the religion of the gospel unjustly invested with a repulsive aspect, as if it frowned in sullen displeasure on every source of earthly enjoyment which is congenial to our nature, and adapted to the ardent aspirations after happiness which God has Himself implanted in the youthful heart. I cannot indeed conceive a view of the character of God, more forbidding in itself, or more opposed to the delineation of His nature, contained in His revealed word, than to represent Him as placing His children in a world,

where He has encompassed them with so many sources of enjoyment, and then commanding them with a stern frown, to abstain from them all. No! no! *This is not* the scriptural view of the character of that God, who, in that brief but most beautiful delineation, which contains volumes in the compass of a single sentence, is declared to be *love*. He does not set His children down to a richly furnished banquet, where with munificent bounty He has provided a vast variety of delights, to gladden every sense—and then, when they stretch forth their hand to take of what His goodness has set before them, cry out to them, with a threatening tone, “Touch not—taste not—or ye die.”

He does indeed (and it is in the overflowings of His love that He does) thus warn them to *abstain* from all *debasing* or *defiling* pleasures, which would spoil their relish for the divine enjoyment that flows from communion with Himself; and He does (and it is in the fondness of a Father’s love) command them to partake, with *sober* and *self-denying temperance*, of the *purest* earthly pleasures which His bounty has provided.

But He does *not* forbid a temperate and thankful enjoyment of the manifold blessings which, with such a lavish hand of love, He has scattered in our path. He does *not* tantalize us with the tempting display of a banquet which he forbids us, even with a sober and a sanctified temperance, to taste. Why has He so “clothed this world with beauty for rebellious man?” Why has He so replenished it with the tokens of His loving-kindness? Why has He so plentifully furnished it with contrivances for our comfort, and stamped the impress of His benevolence on every object that meets our view? Why has He made every sense an avenue to enjoyment, and then encompassed us with materials to minister to the gratification of them all? What

mean the charms of nature's scenery—the lovely tints that beautify the face of creation—the flowers that gladden our path—the fruits that gratify our taste? What means the smile that sparkles on the cheek of infancy—the glee of childhood—the bounding elasticity of youth—the glance of intellect—the glow of affection—the sympathies of friendship—the endearments of love? What mean the sacred ties of home, where heart responds to heart in sweet and sacred unison, that makes a happy and a hallowed home a very miniature of heaven? Oh! what mean all these, what *can* they mean, but that He who is love delights in the happiness of His children, and has exercised the ingenuity of His divine wisdom in contrivances for their enjoyment, so multiplied and so diversified, that if they will only seek it in the paths He has prescribed, and enjoy it in the spirit He has sanctioned, pure pleasure will spring up before them, and around them, at every step they take! Yes! to His grateful and obedient children, who walk in the light of His countenance, this world, ay, this wilderness world, wears the smiling aspect of a paradise restored—“joy and gladness are found therein—thanksgiving and the voice of melody!” Walk where they will, with His smile gilding all the scenery around, and His voice breathing bliss, their ways are indeed “ways of pleasantness, and all their paths are peace.”

I do not forget, that ever since the fall, sin has mingled its poison with every, even the purest pleasures of earth; and that the Christian requires the most constant watchfulness, lest he be insnared by even allowable enjoyments; lest his heart, instead of being drawn closer to the Giver, in the bonds of grateful affection, by the gifts of His bounty, should be enticed by them into an idolatrous attachment to the things seen and temporal; and, instead of being attracted heavenward by the purified happiness of

earth, should thereby be chained down to this lower world, and be but too well disposed here to take up its rest. I am aware of all this—and of the necessity to which it gives birth, of unslumbering vigilance, and jealous circumspection, and fervent prayer, on the Christian's part, lest even things lawful should prove a snare and a hinderance to his spiritual advancement; and he should be tempted, like the dove of old, when the waters of the deluge were abated, and the world once more looked green and smiling, to linger amidst its well-loved scenes, and return to the ark no more. And therefore is it, I doubt not, that a loving Father so often sends afflictions, as the tokens of His watchful tenderness to the children of His love. Therefore is it that, like the eagle with its little ones, He so often shakes and disturbs their earthly resting-place, when He sees them too prone to nestle there, and forget to wing their heavenward flight. Therefore is it, that when their affections are beginning to cleave too closely to earth, He cuts asunder some of the strongest ties which link them to it—and dries up some of its sweetest springs of earthly bliss, only that their thirst may be quickened for the infinitely sweeter draught of heavenly joy, which Himself, "the fountain of living waters," can alone supply. But while I fully admit the indispensable necessity for continued circumspection, and a holy self-denying moderation, in the enjoyment of even the purest pleasures of an earthly stamp; and while I freely acknowledge that the child of God, conscious that there is a traitor in his heart, ever ready to betray him to the assaults of Satan, whose most dangerous temptations often come through the channel of lawful pursuits and pleasures, will be always on his guard, and "watch unto prayer," lest in the midst of the most innocent indulgences "he enter into temptation," still I contend that with all this watchfulness, prayerfulness, and

self-denying moderation, the Christian has altogether the advantage over the worldling, in the enjoyment of the happiness which springs from every purer earthly source. And I contend also, that, when *thus* enjoyed, and found by experience to be a means of attracting, as it ought ever to do, the Christian's heart Godward and heavenward, such happiness is not merely not forbidden by a gracious God, but should be regarded as His bounteous gift, designed to deepen the gratitude of His children, and thus to increase their delight in His service on earth, and their desire for His presence in heaven.

In truth, let but the love of God maintain its rightful supremacy in the heart; let but His glory be abidingly regarded as the paramount object of the life; let but the smile of His countenance, and the enjoyment of His presence, be desired and pursued, as the chief happiness for which the spirit thirsts; and then the subordinate enjoyment, flowing from every legitimate earthly source, sanctified by His Spirit, and sweetened by His smile, may not only be safely indulged in, but will even assist the believer's growth in grace and meetness for heaven, by attuning his heart to the spirit of grateful gladness, and his lips to the song of thankful praise. We therefore contend that it is the privilege of the Christian pilgrim to tread his heavenward path with a sober, indeed, but not a mournful spirit—with a circumspect, but not a saddened step—with a thoughtful, but not a melancholy countenance. Yea, so far from this, we would say, that he deeply wrongs his high and holy calling, the precious privileges he enjoys, and the glorious destiny that awaits him, if his spirit have not that holy gladness, and his step that buoyant tread, and his countenance that contented smile which befit an heir of God—a traveller to the skies—and which would glorify God, by proclaiming to all around, that he was happy in the choice

he had made, of God for his portion, and heaven for his home—that the peace of God is indeed a pearl of great price—that the service of the Saviour is a light and pleasant yoke—and that the prospect of eternal glory sheds, to the eye of the child of God, a halo of celestial splendour round every purified enjoyment which this world can supply. Surely, then, the Christian may well leave it to the worldling to travel on with fainting heart and fearful step, to meet an insulted and angry God, and plunge into an unknown, a dreadful eternity! Indeed I cannot but feel it to be the bounden duty of every real Christian, to recommend the service of his beloved Saviour, by the exhibition, even in his outward deportment, of the inward peace and happiness which that service is designed and pre-eminently fitted to inspire. Thus will he do all in his power to contradict the libel which the world pronounces on the religion of the gospel, by thus removing the erroneous impression that the Saviour's is a melancholy service, and representing it in its genuine character of holy cheerfulness, peace, and joy. Nothing would tend more attractively to win the affections of the young to that blessed service, than to witness in the demeanour of its most devoted followers an abiding cheerfulness and contentment, which would proclaim, more persuasively than the most eloquent language, that they had found solid and satisfying peace. The worldling can know nothing of the happiness which the Christian enjoys in the secrecy of his chamber, when he goes up to the mount of transfiguration, in holy communion with his Father in heaven; but he *can* see the light of holy gladness, sparkling on his countenance, which, as he comes down from the mount, that communion ought ever to leave shining there. And this would constrain him to believe, that the real Christian must have discovered the secret of true happiness, as he appears

to be in possession of a source of cheerfulness which sorrow cannot darken, nor even death destroy.

Let the child of God then keep the tears which the agonizing struggle with indwelling sin, or the bitter consciousness of ingratitude to his God, will often wring from him—let him keep these for his hours of devout intercourse with that pitying Father, who will understand his sorrow, and gently wipe these tears away. But let him meet the children of the world, in whatever intercourse he is providentially led to hold with them, with a smile of cheerful contentment on his countenance, which will tell them, in a language that even by them cannot be mistaken, that peace is the inmate of the Christian's breast. Let the children of God remember, that as they are forbidden by the voice of gratitude to walk mournfully before the Lord of hosts, it is even more urgently required of them, by that same principle, not to walk mournfully before their fellow-men, lest they should seem to countenance the world's false estimate of His service, and allow the people of the world to infer, that the Saviour's yoke is (as they do not scruple to confess, and practically to prove, they think it to be) a galling yoke.

I have spoken of *holy cheerfulness* as the characteristic of the true Christian's deportment, by which he would so attractively recommend the gospel and glorify his God; because the happiness which has taken up its abode in a believer's heart is more closely allied to cheerfulness than to mirth. And one of the reasons why religion's characters are sometimes considered gloomy is, because the world mistakes for melancholy that composure of spirit which Christian peace imparts; and imagines happiness to consist in that wild gaiety, or boisterous merriment, which, in its estimation, form the distinguishing characteristics of true joy. But herein the world entirely mistakes the nature of true hap-

piness, which, in the language of the poet, "is a serious thing," and wears such an aspect "as folly might mistake for want of joy." How often is it our own experience, that our gayest are not our happiest hours—that "in the midst of laughter the heart is sad," and that the cheerful smile of placid contentment is a far surer index of a happy heart than the loud laughter of noisy mirth! Christian cheerfulness is the sunshine of the soul, and diffuses a bright warm glow of gladdening exhilaration all around. Worldly merriment is the lightning-flash, sparkling with an evanescent brilliancy, that only serves, when its short-lived glare is past, to leave the spirit's gloom deeper and darker than before. We are not then to wonder that the world often unjustly accuses the Christian of melancholy, as it is incapable of distinguishing seriousness from sadness; and seems to suppose laughter, and gaiety of manner, to be the only sure outward and visible signs of inward joy.

While, therefore, we would protest against a gloomy countenance and a melancholy deportment in the children of God, as inconsistent with a Christian's high and happy privileges and prospects, and calculated to bring discredit on the cause they love, we would equally protest against those false criteria of happiness which the world sets up; and contend, that the Christian is not to be considered gloomy because his happiness is of too deep and silent a character to be exhibited in the superficial ebullitions of noisy mirth.

"It is," as Archbishop Leighton says, in his incomparable commentary on St. Peter, "with joys, as they say of cares and griefs, '*Leves loquuntur; ingentes stupent.*' The deepest waters run stillest. True joy is a solid, grave thing—dwells more in the heart than in the countenance—whereas, on the con-

trary, base and false joys are but superficial; skin-deep (as we say,) they are all in the face."

In truth, there is too much of God in a Christian's happiness to admit of its being, as to its distinguishing character, boisterous or mirthful; although "he that can say—the righteousness of Jesus Christ is mine, and in Him the favour of God, and the hope of eternal happiness, *hath* such a light as can shine in the darkest dungeon, yea, in the dark valley of the shadow of death itself." There is, indeed, a harmless play of wit, unsullied by a tinge of impurity, or a breath of unkindness—an innocent exhilaration of spirit, guarded by vigilant self-possession from any unsuitable excess. Yea, there may be a constitutional vivacity, restrained within due bounds by Christian circumspection, in which the most devoted child of God may *occasionally* indulge. For the conflict with sin in his own soul, and the prevalence of ungodliness in the world around him, must, at least, *should*, so dispose his mind to a serious cast of character, as to prevent these occasional indulgences of a more lively or playful spirit from becoming habitual, and thus throwing into the shade the more exalted characteristics of a child of God. Nor do we hesitate to declare, that a believer of such a temperament should be much on his guard lest he should ever be betrayed into an expression that could injure a fellow-Christian's character, or give a Christian brother's or sister's heart a moment's pain; or lest by a too frequent indulgence in his constitutional tendency to vivacity, wit, or humour, a tone of unsuitable levity or frivolity should insensibly steal over his spirit and deportment; and so at once lower the standard of the Christian character in the eyes of the world, and prevent his own extended usefulness in the Christian cause. There is also another point of view in which the habitual deportment of a believer should bear such a decided stamp of hea-

venly-mindedness as is altogether inconsistent with the habitual indulgence of humour, however harmless; or wit, however inoffensive. "Our conversation," says the apostle, "is in heaven." The desire of the Christian is to realize, by anticipation and fore-taste, as much of the happiness of heaven as can be enjoyed on earth. Now it is utterly incompatible with this desire, or any consistent efforts for its accomplishment, *habitually* to cherish and indulge a taste for wit, vivacity, or humour. A heart where the aspiration after heavenly happiness was warmly felt, where the visions of celestial bliss—of the fulness of joy in God's presence—of joining with cherubim and seraphim, and all the multitude of the redeemed, in the sublime songs and services of the upper sanctuary, were abidingly cherished, *such* a heart (and such, if not unfaithful to himself, is every Christian's heart) could not congenialize with that spirit of even the most innocent playfulness *habitually* indulged, which unfits the mind for all high and holy pleasures and pursuits.

Having thus endeavoured to remove some of the prejudices which might prevent this subject from being viewed in an impartial light, and to exhibit some of the distinguishing characteristics of *true* happiness, as contrasted with that *false glare* which imposes on the children of the world, I would now proceed to consider this part of our subject more in detail, and to prove that Christianity, by sanctifying, additionally sweetens every purified source of earthly enjoyment. And in order to give a clearer and fuller demonstration of this assertion, I would examine more particularly some of the chief sources of earthly enjoyment, and show that the Christian has unquestionably the advantage of the worldling in regard to them all.

Thus is an incidental observation suggested by this part of our subject, to which I would wish very

briefly to advert. The observation is this: That the divine original of Christianity, and its divine adaptation to the great end it proposes, as far as man is concerned, even his highest happiness, are clearly evidenced by the abundant provision which it contains for the legitimate indulgence of every desire, appetite, and affection, that the Creator has Himself implanted in our hearts. Whether it be the desire for pleasure, or glory; for the favour of the great, or the esteem of the good; for the aspirations of intellect, or the acquisition of knowledge; for the enjoyment of social intercourse, or for the endearing communion of true friendship and devoted love; for all these the religion of the gospel most abundantly provides, and secures to its faithful votary the highest measure of happiness which the legitimate gratification of these desires imparts. With this consideration steadily kept in view, let us proceed to our proposed detail;—and 1, Let us look, in the first instance, to those pleasures which flow through the channel of the senses.

Now, however paradoxical it may appear, I do not hesitate to assert, that the temperate Christian is the true man of pleasure; and has the highest enjoyment of the very gratifications which might at first sight seem to be the peculiar portion of the sensualist. It is incontrovertible, that excess in these gratifications always produces satiety and disgust, whereas moderation contributes to increased enjoyment. To which, as we before remarked, must be added the peculiar sweetness infused into them by that feeling of gratitude to God, as their Giver, which imparts to the thankful Christian's temperate feast a relish that the pampered voluptuary never can enjoy. Besides, the direct tendency of excessive indulgence is to induce diseases, which enfeeble and torture the voluptuary's frame, and necessarily imbitter his spirit, and mar his enjoyments. While

the tendency of temperance is to promote health, with its natural accompaniment, a vigorous and cheerful frame of mind. When we combine all these considerations can we doubt, that the Christian who sits down with a thankful heart to a comparatively homely meal, and partakes of it with a sober temperance, and a grateful sense of the goodness of God in supplying his bodily wants, as well as with a sincere desire to employ the strength it imparts in the service of that God, derives a greater gratification from the simplest fare *thus* seasoned, than the bloated epicure can possibly derive from the most sumptuous and luxurious feast that ever pampered the sensualist's vitiated taste. "Better, indeed, is a dinner of herbs," where love to God is, "than a stalled ox," where enmity to Him is reigning in the heart.

We have before adverted to the manifold miseries attendant on a career of licentiousness, and feel it would be an insult to institute even a momentary comparison between its debasing gratifications and the purified enjoyments of Christian wedded love, refined by the endearing sentiment of mutual affection, and sanctified by the hallowing blessing of Him who has pronounced it "honourable in all," and adorned and beautified the marriage state by His presence and miraculous power at a marriage feast; consecrating it to "such an excellent mystery, that in it is signified and represented the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and His Church," and thus encircling its happiness with a halo of heavenly light! Surely it must be needless to compare such happiness with the vile and brutalized gratifications of the votary of licentiousness, in order to prove that herein the Christian has an unquestionable superiority over the slave of sin. You may as well compare the zephyr's balmy breath with the sirocco's blighting blast, or the peaceful river's pure refreshing stream

with the lava's dark and desolating flood of fire, as compare the pure and peaceful happiness of holy wedded love with the polluted and turbulent enjoyments of unhallowed licentiousness, linked as the former is with all the sweetest affections of the human heart, all the dearest charities of a happy home, and radiant with the smile, and breathing of the bliss of heaven; and associated as the latter is with all the most degrading and destructive appetites of our fallen nature, and all those tormenting passions, which make their victim's breast a very type and miniature of hell.

Are not these considerations sufficient to show, that Christianity, by laying a hallowed restraint on all forbidden and inordinate indulgences of sensual appetites; by enjoining a temperate use even of the most allowable gratifications which come through the channel of the senses; by purifying them from that grossness which generates disgust, and restricting them from that excess which engenders satiety; by forbidding that licentiousness which induces disease, and cherishing that self-denial which promotes health; and by infusing into every legitimate enjoyment that additional sweetness which gratitude to God imparts, thus making them all a means of drawing the heart closer to God, and rendering the soul meeter for heaven, Christianity gives her faithful follower the most decided advantage, even on the score of the enjoyments which the senses supply, over the most favoured votary of vice.

CHAPTER XII.

INTELLECTUAL ENJOYMENT.

LET us now examine the pleasures which flow through the channel of the intellect. And here again I assert, without fear of contradiction, that in the

enjoyment of these also the Christian has decidedly the advantage of the worldling.

Now, in proof of this assertion, I would observe, that there is a vast range of pleasures of an intellectual character, which the Christian intensely enjoys, and from which the worldling is entirely excluded, and these pleasures of the highest and most delightful stamp. I mean those connected with the reverential investigation into the works of Creation, as testifying to the wisdom and goodness of the Creator; and into the attributes and government of God, more especially as developed in the scheme of redemption. These manifestly form the sublimest subject for the human intellect to grasp; and consequently the enjoyment flowing from the exercise of the faculties on this magnificent theme, when approached and investigated in an humble and devout spirit, must be of the very highest order. But whatever be the intellectual powers of the unconverted man, however high the order of his talents, or extensive the range of his acquirements, from *this* enjoyment he is necessarily shut out. He may be able indeed to comprehend and unfold the laws which regulate the material universe—he may be able to analyze and admire its wondrous mechanism—he may be able to dive into the bowels of the earth, and explore with scientific eye the treasures that lie hidden there; or to soar up, on scientific wing, to the vault of heaven, and trace the planets in their mystic course. But whatever be the gratification which such pursuits may yield him, (and we do not deny that they will yield him a high degree of intellectual enjoyment,) he is altogether debarred from the far nobler and sweeter pleasures which the Christian derives from contemplating, in all the diversified displays of divine wisdom and goodness which the material universe exhibits, the character of Him whom, with mingled affection and awe, he loves and adores as his Father and his God!

To the mere man of science, the world may look like a splendid temple, whose majestic pillars and fair proportions he can gaze on with admiration; but he must still be a stranger to the far higher enjoyment which the Christian philosopher derives from worshipping the Spirit whose glory fills that temple, and joining with all his fellow-worshippers in celebrating His perfections, and singing His praise. Would it not be absurd to compare for one moment the pleasure which philosophy could impart to a Voltaire, with that which she would pour into the soul of a Boyle? Or to imagine that the stupendous discoveries of astronomy could yield to an infidel, no matter how high the order of his intellectual powers and attainments, a gratification in any degree approximating to what a Newton would derive from this sublime source? Do not the astronomical lectures of Chalmers supply in our own day, a splendid proof what exalted pleasure this science pours into a Christian philosopher's heart? Must not the feeling of reverential love to the adorable Creator of those suns and systems which astronomy unveils to our view, mingled with the yet deeper feeling of devout gratitude to Him, when regarded as his Redeemer, inspire the Christian astronomer with a holy delight, when contemplating the starry wonders of the sky, immeasurably superior to what the infidel or undevout astronomer can derive from the contemplation? For be it ever remembered, whatever intellectual enjoyment the sublimity of those discoveries, and the vast variety of most interesting phenomena which they have unfolded, are calculated to afford, can be tasted as fully by the Christian as by the infidel astronomer, while the former enjoys a superadded gratification, altogether surpassing the mere intellectual one, in tracing a loving Father's attributes in all these shining orbs that gem the brow of night—in hearing “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the fir-

mament proclaim His handywork"—in reflecting that He who made them all is his own beloved Saviour, whose omnipotence, so majestically displayed in the magnificent scenery of the skies, is pledged for his safety and his happiness, in time and through eternity—and in looking forward to the promised period when He shall appear in the clouds of heaven, coming in power and great glory, to raise him to a blood-bought throne on high, where he shall shine with a sun-like splendour, surpassing the most brilliant of those stars for ever and ever! Now surely such contemplations, and such hopes, must exalt the enjoyment of the Christian, in surveying the wonders that astronomy unfolds, immensely above that which the most powerful intellect, if unbaptized at the fountain of a Saviour's love, can possibly derive from this source.

The same mode of reasoning will apply to every other department of intellectual pursuit. For whether it be the investigation of the laws that regulate the world of matter or the world of mind—whether the field of contemplation be heaven with all its starry host, or earth with all its beauteous scenery—whether the wondrous mechanism of the human frame, the various forms of vegetable life, or the diversified tribes of animated nature, the Christian scholar enjoys equally with the mere man of science whatever of intellectual gratification these pursuits can yield; while, in his case, that gratification is greatly heightened and endeared by the more elevated purposes to which he applies all his attainments—even the advancement of the happiness of his fellow-creatures and glory of God; and by the increased feelings of reverential love and adoration towards the God of his salvation which such pursuits awaken in his soul.

Let us now view the subject in another aspect. Perhaps there is no source of earthly enjoyment

which affords a purer or sweeter pleasure to a mind imbued with taste and feeling, than the beautiful scenery of creation, whether in its softer or sublimer features. To stand on some lofty mountain-top, which commands a wide panoramic view of some of those delightful scenes which show that earth, marred and dimmed as has been her primeval loveliness by the sullying blight of sin, "has still some traces of her youthful beauty left"—and to look out on the enchanting prospect spread before the eye on every side, diversified with all the variety of mountain and valley—waving woods and verdant lawns—the majestic ocean or the peaceful river—all blended together in harmonious combination, and lit up with the serene splendour of a summer evening sun—what heart is there that must not thrill with admiration and delight while gazing on a scene like this? Now I do not deny that there may be a merely sentimental enjoyment of such a scene—that a spirit of enthusiastic temperament, and more refined tastes, even though unrenewed by divine grace, will intensely delight in gazing on such a prospect, and will so sympathize with the spirit of external nature, as to be elevated by her sublimity, softened by her tenderness, and gladdened by her smile. When the various melodies of nature's music steal upon his ear—the roar of distant ocean, and the song of birds, and the breathings of the mountain breeze, all mingling into a harmonious "concord of sweet sounds," I can conceive that his heart will throb with a responsive thrill of joy, echoing the voice of gladness which nature lifts up around him. Yea, and further—I can conceive, that with this joy there may be mingled a kind of sentimental piety, which delights to trace in such a scene the beneficence of the Creator, and to link soothing dreams of His benignity with all the sweet melodies of nature's voice. But oh! how faint, how cold, how poor the joy which

this sentimental enthusiast, this poetical worshipper of nature's God, can taste, even in the moment of his highest, warmest raptures, when compared with what the child of God experiences, when he feels, after having gazed in speechless admiration and delight on such scenes, that he,

"With filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say—'My Father made them all!'"

What superadded pleasure must this filial feeling, this sweet reflection, that all the beauteous scenery around him is the workmanship of a Father's hand, pour into the Christian's heart! What holy delight will *he* derive from the thought, that a Father's smile beams on him in every gleam of sunshine which sparkles on his view—that a Father's character is mirrored in every scene of nature's loveliness which meets his eye, and a Father's voice is whispering to him in every sound of nature's melody which steals upon his ear! Will not a thousand delightful recollections of that Father's tenderness in times past, a thousand delightful anticipations of His unchangeable faithfulness and love for the time to come, mingle with the gladdened emotions such a scene must inspire, deepening and hallowing all his joy? How unsubstantial, how unsatisfying the rapturous reveries of the sentimental worshipper of nature, compared with "the sober certainty of waking bliss," enjoyed by the Christian worshipper of nature's God, when he gazes on her beauteous scenery as the workmanship of a Father's hand!

Let any one peruse the poems of Cowper, or the life of the late Legh Richmond, (to select but two out of a multitude of examples that might be adduced,) and he cannot fail to be convinced that the love of the Saviour, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, imparts to the exquisite enjoyment, emanating from the admiration of beautiful scenery, a

sweetness of flavour, and a halo of glory, essentially divine!

How does the Christian delight, wherever he turns his eye, to trace

“The unambiguous footsteps of the God,
Who gives its lustre to an insect’s wing,
And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds!”

But not merely does the *Creator’s* benignity call forth his gratitude, but all nature speaks to his heart of a *Redeemer’s* love; for he remembers, in the exquisite language of the poet—that,

“One Spirit, *His*
Who wore the platted thorns with bleeding brows,
Rules universal nature! Not a flower
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,
Of *His* unrivalled pencil!”

In truth, Scripture has made creation to a Christian a beautiful type and eloquent preacher of Christ. There is not an object in nature that does not remind him of the Saviour, either as shadowing out, by typical resemblance, some of His divine attributes; or as linked with some lesson of divine wisdom and love, that fell from His lips. He cannot look up, without beholding with the eye of faith, the glory of the “Sun of Righteousness—the Bright and Morning Star.” He cannot look around without thinking of the “Rock of Ages—the Righteous Branch—the Rose of Sharon—the True Vine.” The sower sowing his seed—the reapers in the harvest-field—the fisherman casting his net into the sea—all awaken associations connected with his name and cause. Not a bird of the air, nor a flower of the field, but speaks to his heart of the watchfulness and tenderness of a Saviour’s care. To him the face of nature is as a bright and beautiful mirror, in which that Saviour’s image is reflected, and *His* voice is heard by him in every melody that meets his ear. And it is only a Christian can understand the exquisite pleasure which flows into his soul,

when, as he walks abroad through nature's scenes, sweet thoughts of Him who is the beloved of his soul, are suggested by every object around; which, by reminding him of some of the Redeemer's loveliest traits of character—some of His gracious offices—or some of His most precious gifts, draws his heart closer to Him, in the bonds of gratitude, adoration, and love. And such feelings, while they sanctify, additionally exalt and sweeten the enjoyment which the beautiful scenery of nature supplies.

But never, perhaps, was the chief reason for the superiority of the Christian's enjoyment of nature's loveliness, over that which can be felt by the most refined but unconsecrated sentimentalism, more eloquently described than in Cowper's sublime address to the Saviour, where, when expatiating on the blissful effects of that divine liberty, which the Son of God imparts to His believing people, appealing to the Eternal Word, he exclaims—

“When liberty, like day,
Breaks on the soul, and by a flash from heaven,
Fires all the faculties with glorious joy—
A voice is heard that mortal ears hear not
Till Thou hast touched them—’tis the voice of song,
A loud Hosanna sent from all Thy works,
Which he that hears it, with a shout repeats,
And adds his rapture to the general praise!
In that blest moment, nature, throwing wide
Her veil opake, discloses, with a smile,
The Author of her beauties, who, retired
Behind His own creation, works unseen
By the impure, and hears his power denied!”

Now, here lies the true secret of the Christian's superiority in this enjoyment. To his purified vision, the Author of nature's beauties is unveiled, under the endearing character of his Redeemer; and His smile lights up all the scenery with celestial glory. To his ears, a voice, that mortal ears hear not till God has touched them, speaks in sweetest accents of a beloved Saviour's praise.

With what holy joy then does the grateful Christian listen to, and join in the “loud Hosanna sent from all *His* works,” when he reflects that though He made them all, yet, in the unfathomable depths of a Redeemer’s love, He veiled the Creator’s glory under the form of a man of sorrows, for his sake and for his salvation! It is this, it is this thought which fills his heart, even to overflowing, with grateful love and happiness, when he looks around him on all those beauteous scenes, and says to himself, “The hands, which spread all this loveliness around me, are the very hands which, in the stupendous sacrifice of a Saviour’s love, were stretched out for me on Calvary’s cross!”

Now to *this* joy, the mere admirer of nature, however ardent his admiration, and however intense the delight which it affords, must be an utter stranger, and what joy can be compared with this?

He may gaze in rapture on the face of nature, but the “veil opake” which sin has flung over it, is not thrown aside for him—so that to his eye, there beams from it no brightening splendour of a Saviour’s smile. The melodies of nature may sound sweetly to his ear, but no voice of heavenly song, no “loud Hosanna” can be heard by him, chanting a Saviour’s praise! How poor then must his pleasures be, how earthly in their origin and end, compared with those which the child of God enjoys—which have their source in heaven, and lift the soul up to the heaven from which they spring!

Let us now try music, as a source of intellectual enjoyment, by the same test, and we shall find the same result.

When this delightful art is employed as the channel for expressing devotional feelings—when the voice and heart are together attuned to the praise of God our Saviour, and thus the believer, even while sojourning in this vale of tears, is enabled to take

part with the choir of heaven, and join in the hallelujahs of the skies—surely it is then that the highest degree of enjoyment which music can impart, is poured into the soul. Shall we compare *such* enjoyment, which anticipates and foretastes so much of the joy of angels and the bliss of heaven, with—I will not insult the hallowed theme by a comparison with the gratification afforded by songs that breathe the spirit of voluptuousness, or administer in any measure to vice—but even with the pleasure that the purest strains of a mere earthly stamp can ever afford? I do not here mean to deny that there is much, yea, exquisite enjoyment to the lovers of music, connected with the expression of purified earthly feeling, when clothed in the combined charms of poetry and song. But this I will assert, without fear of contradiction, that the sincere Christian, when engaged in singing, or in listening to, the praises of his beloved Saviour, when sung by those who love His name, derives from music the very purest, sweetest, and most exalted enjoyment that can flow through this channel into the human heart—and that the most exquisite pleasure which the finest music, of an altogether earthly character, can inspire, will not bear a moment's comparison with that which the simplest strains of melody, when wafting the incense of gratitude from a believer's heart up to the throne of God, will impart! While, in point of sublimity and grandeur, how immeasurably does the Hallelujah chorus of Handel soar above the loftiest elevation that mere earthly subjects can ever reach; and afford a proportionably more exalted enjoyment to the humblest Christian, than it can yield to the most enthusiastic or talented amateur in music, whose heart is not in unison with the subject of the song! Conceive a large congregation of Christians, assembled in the sanctuary—or even a little band of fellow-disciples met together, to enjoy in sweet communion, a few hours of social inter-

course—and, with hearts glowing with a Saviour's love, uniting together in singing His praise; and can it be for a moment doubted, that music, when thus consecrated to the service of God, is employed in its legitimate occupation—is fulfilling the high destiny for which its Author designed it—and consequently is imparting the hallowed happiness which He graciously intended it should communicate—and which it cannot, when employed in any meaner service, supply?

I would, therefore, maintain that it is when music is employed as the handmaid of piety—when her high and holy purpose is to fan the flame of devotion—when the lips, which pour forth her inspiration, are as a sacred censer, breathing out the sweet incense of gratitude to God, *then—then* it is that music kindles her sublimest raptures in the soul! And here I cannot forbear remarking, before I conclude, how much it is to be deplored that any whom God has gifted with this talent, should ever refuse to employ it in the public services of the sanctuary, by taking part in singing His praise. But that any who *really love* Him, and are capacitated for *thus* expressing their gratitude, should remain silent in the sanctuary, when His praises are sung, is one of those anomalies of the Christian character which cannot but excite our unqualified sorrow and surprise. Should these pages meet the eye of such, I would affectionately entreat of them to ask themselves—Why they are guilty of such deplorable inconsistency?—Why do they cheat God of the glory so justly His due—their fellow-Christians of the benefit, and their own souls of the happiness, such an employment of their vocal talents, if performed in a suitable spirit, must ever yield? Why refuse to join in that part of the service of the Christian Sabbath which most of all assimilates and approximates the worship of the earthly temple to that of the heaven-

ly sanctuary—and the services and enjoyments of the church militant on earth to those of the church triumphant in heaven? Why, why will they who *feel* what they owe to the love of God in Christ, refuse to join in the sanctuary with His children in praising the Giver of *all* the blessings they enjoy? Can they reconcile such conduct with the gratitude they owe to Him who has bought for them, with His own blood, a place in that celestial choir who shall be employed, throughout the ages of eternity, in singing His praise?

I would also suggest to all Christian heads of families, how much the combining, when it can be accomplished, a hymn with prayer and the reading of the scriptures, in family worship, conduces to its profitable and pleasurable performance. It has, when conducted in a devotional spirit, and animated by the Holy Ghost with celestial fire, a peculiar tendency to preserve the worship of the domestic circle from degenerating into cold formality or chilling gloom; and to impart to it a character of holy cheerfulness and sacred joy! And never, perhaps, does a Christian family on earth exhibit more of a resemblance to the family of God in heaven, never does it catch a brighter glimpse of the glory within the veil, or a sweeter foretaste of the fulness of joy in the presence of God, than when the hearts and voices of all its members are thus blended together, while assembled around the family altar, in some of those sweet songs of praise which are still, as it were, lingering on the harp of David, or which the piety of gifted saints, in later times, or in our own day, has supplied. Then, then, indeed, does that little band of rejoicing worshippers here below participate in the high and holy happiness of those worshippers before the throne on high, who "rest not day or night, singing praises unto Him who sitteth on that throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever!"

CHAPTER XIII.

PLEASURES OF THE IMAGINATION.

LET us try our proposed test in one more example—I mean the pleasures of an intellectual character, which flow through the channel of the imagination; and we shall find that in regard to these also, Christianity has placed her votaries on a vantage-ground, which raises their enjoyment of the pleasures which the imagination imparts, vastly above what the worldling can ever derive from this source.

If we attentively examine the constitution of our mental system, we shall find that the imagination is one of the most important of our faculties, and exercises the most powerful influence over our character and our happiness.

It is this faculty which invests with such an attractive aspect, and tinges with such brilliant colouring, the opening scenes of life to the inexperienced eye of youth. It is this faculty which gives such fatal charms to the forbidden fruit of sinful pleasure, and throws round the objects of earthly ambition such a dazzling glare of seductive splendour. It is this faculty which arrays the various idols that the votaries of this world worship with such enticing allurements, that their blinded worshippers think it not too much to sacrifice even the favour of God and the glories of heaven for the objects of their idolatrous devotion. And therefore it is this faculty of which Satan makes such fearful use, in seducing the souls of men into the snares by which he hopes to chain down their affections and desires to the things of time and sense, and thus induce them to forget and forego the joys and glories of eternity.

Surely these considerations, alone, are sufficient to show, that on the due direction and regulation of this

faculty, the formation of our character, and consequently of our happiness, must materially depend. If the imagination be allowed to run riot amidst the vanities of the world, or the allurements of voluptuousness—if it be permitted to present the objects of earthly desire to the eye of the soul, invested with all its seductive brilliancy; and to inflame the passions by exhibiting to their ardent gaze their appropriate excitements, under the most tempting aspect; and while thus altogether earthly and unhallowed in its influences, to reign with uncontrolled ascendancy over the affections of the heart, it will soon bring the whole man under its demoralizing dominion, and give a fatal bias to all his propensities and passions, concentrating all their energies on the attainment of the objects which it has persuaded its deluded victim to believe will, if attained, secure the most exquisite and satisfying enjoyment, and quench that thirst for happiness which God has implanted in the human heart. The scene that was acted in the Garden of Eden will be repeated with the same ruinous result. The fruit of some forbidden tree will look so tempting to the eye, so much to be desired for the intense delight it promises to yield, that even the divine prohibition—“Eat not, lest ye die”—will be disregarded, and the hand of presumptuous disobedience be stretched forth to grasp the enticing object, in defiance of the threatenings of a holy God!

If such be the influence of the imagination, what must be the power of poetry, which appeals to it with such attractiveness and force, either for the purposes of good or evil, according to its tendency and tone! And how great is the guilt of those who abuse this noble gift of God, by making it the means of enlisting the imagination in the service of sin!—whether, as in the case of a late highly-gifted but unhappy poet, who employed his splendid talents (given him assuredly for a far nobler purpose) in en-

deavouring to invest with a kind of gloomy grandeur—a stern sublimity—the character of a proud, scornful, scoffing misanthropist—a character branded in scripture with the deepest reprobation, because so essentially opposed both to the happiness of man, and to the character of God; or whether it be that yet more dangerous and debasing abuse of poetical talent which prostitutes it to the vilest purposes, making it pander to the indulgence of our sensual appetites, by clothing corrupting sentiment with a veil of beautiful texture, which partially conceals its deformity—turning love into licentiousness, and thus degrading a pure, generous, refined affection, delighting to minister to another's happiness, into a vile, selfish, grovelling appetite, seeking entirely its own gratification—imbodying the seductive spirit of voluptuousness in a form of fatal fascination, that, siren-like, enchants only to destroy—and, by mingling it in a delicious draught, sparkling in a golden cup, insinuating the poison of impurity into the imagination and the heart, where, once it is introduced, it blights the very springs of moral and spiritual life, and turns all within into corruption, defilement, and death!

Oh! that those who are gifted with, but thus profane, this precious talent would consider *who* intrusted it to them, and to whom they must answer for its abuse; if they would keep in mind to what a malignant spirit they are indebted for the inspiration that pervades their poetry, and that they owe to Satan what they and their admirers conceive to be their happiest thoughts; if they would reflect how, by the perversion of this gift, those who might have ranked high among the benefactors of mankind, become a curse to their fellow-men; and would remember, that for every corrupting line they have ever written, they must give an account to God in the day of judgment, who will hold them responsible for *all* the

guilt and misery they have been instrumental in spreading; and that, if eternally ruined themselves, their own everlasting anguish will be fearfully aggravated by the reproaches and torments of every lost soul they have assisted in ruining; so that the amount of their guilt, and the stores of retributive vengeance, will be continually accumulating till the judgment-day! If they would seriously reflect on all this, surely they would not dare to publish (still less, if spared till maturer years, instead of repenting of the sins of their youth, would they dare, with the cold-blooded cruelty of relentless and matured depravity, to perpetuate) productions whose only tendency is to sully the purity of the youthful mind—to seduce the unwary into the paths of sin—to sap the springs of domestic happiness—to sever the bonds of social life—to advance the empire of Satan—to dishonour the religion of the Saviour—and to insult the majesty of God; thus turning, with revolting ingratitude and impiety, one of the most benevolent arrangements of the Creator, which bears the most legible impress of His benignity, and which He designed to administer so abundantly to the happiness of man, into one of the most offensive insults to the holiness of His nature, and one of the most fruitful sources of human demoralization, misery, and crime!

How different the influence of poetry when the source of her inspiration is the Holy Spirit, and the aim of her aspirations the glory of God!—when she breathes her heavenly musings in the sublime strains of an Isaiah, the tender lamentations of a Jeremiah, the various tones of sacred melody that issue from the harp of the sweet Singer of Israel, or the deep-toned majesty of the Book of Job!—when, to use the eloquent language of one who felt her magic power, “Poetry was the anticipating apostle, the prophetic evangelist, ‘whose feet were beautiful upon the mountains—that published salvation—that said unto Zion,

Thy God reigneth!"—or, to come nearer to our own time, when "we view her in the moments of enraptured piety, in her vigils and devotions with Young, or her heavenly conversations with Cowper," who may, with emphatic propriety, be designated the poet of Christianity!—or, yet nearer to our own day, when we listen to her pouring out her pure and hallowed strains in the classic elegance of a Heber, the fervent piety of the bard of Sheffield, the deep and tender sensibility of a Hemans, the elevated aspirations of a Pollok, or the mournful breathings of consecrated but unbefriended genius in Kirke White.*

* I gladly embrace this opportunity of bearing my humble testimony on behalf of a poem that has recently appeared (Montgomery's "Luther,") in which the character of the great reformer is developed with considerable attractiveness and power, the doctrines of evangelical religion clearly exhibited and eloquently enforced, and the appalling abominations of Popery exposed with uncompromising fidelity and force. A work, therefore, which, in our day when Popery is spreading so rapidly abroad, and even insinuating itself into the bosom of our Scriptural Church, deserves the warm approval and patronage of all who abhor that masterpiece of Satanic skill—that soul-destroying system of anti-scriptural error—who venerate the character of the great reformer, and the principles of the glorious reformation, and love and desire to promote the spread of evangelical truth. The value of such a work will be more fully appreciated if we glance at a sketch of the Papal system, delineated with a masterly hand by Bickersteth, in his "Progress of Popery," which cannot fail to stimulate every real Christian to use every exertion in his power to resist its progress, whether in the more concealed shape of Tractarianism in our own Church, or in its avowed form of open profession at home, or abroad; and thus to rescue the souls of our fellow-creatures from its dreadful and degrading bondage.

"Popery," says Bickersteth, when showing how the Papal system adapts itself to every country, and to every class of individuals, "Popery has that wherewith it can meet every desire of the natural heart, and soothe every anxiety about the soul: for the literate it has prodigious stores of learning; for the illiterate it has its images, pomps, and shows; for the self-righteous it has its innumerable ways of external service; for the most devout it has its unceasing prayers; for the musician it has the most exquisite chants and anthems; for the painter the most splendid efforts of human art; for the imaginative all the visions of fancy, its gloomy cloisters, lights, and processions, incense, and beautiful churches with painted windows, and priests with splendid garments and varied dresses. To quiet the conscience, it has doctrines of human merit, and works of supererogation; to alarm the indifferent, it has the fears of purgatory; to raise the priesthood, they can make a little flour and

But never, perhaps, was the grandeur of poetry, when employed in her legitimate vocation—that is, when consecrated to the service of God, and her power to impart happiness to her votary, under the most afflictive circumstances—more strikingly exhibited, than by the eloquent writer,* (to whom I have already alluded) in a eulogy on Milton, of such surpassing beauty that I cannot deny my reader the gratification I am sure it will supply.

“There lived a *divine old man*, whose everlasting remains we have all admired, whose memory is the pride of England and of nature. His youth was distinguished by a happier lot than, perhaps, genius has often enjoyed at the commencement of its career: he was enabled, by the liberality of fortune, to dedicate his soul to the cultivation of those classical accomplishments, in which almost his infancy delighted: he had attracted admiration at the period when it is most exquisitely felt: he stood forth the literary and political champion of Republican England;—and Europe acknowledged him the conqueror. But, the storm arose; his fortune sunk with the Republic which he had defended; the name which future ages have consecrated was forgotten; and neglect was imbibited by remembered celebrity. Age was advancing;—health was retreating;—Nature hid her

water into a god, and will themselves worship what they make. To give ease to the conscience of the man of the world, and the lover of pleasure, each sin has its indulgence and penance. All men at times are under fear of God’s wrath; their conscience is touched; they are in anxiety; and at such times Popery comes in and gives them a sop that satisfies for the moment, and sends them into the sleep of death. It covers every lust; it calms every fear. It is the devil’s cunning device of twelve hundred years’ growth for leading countless myriads to perdition. *Let us not be ignorant of his devices.*”

* My dear and much-valued friend and college-companion, the late Rev. Charles Wolfe, the author of the far-famed “Ode on the Burial of Sir John Moore;” and equally esteemed and beloved by all who knew him as a most faithful and eloquent ambassador of Christ, and a most attractive exhibition of the Christian character.—See his Life and Remains, by his friend, Archdeacon Russell.

face from him for ever, for, never more to him returned—

‘Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer’s rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine.’

What was the refuge of the deserted veteran from penury, from neglect, from infamy, from darkness? Not in a querulous and peevish despondency; not in an unmanly recantation of principles, *erroneous*, but unchanged; not in the tremendous renunciation of what Heaven has given, and Heaven alone should take away; but he turned from a distracted country, and a voluptuous court—he turned from triumphant enemies, and inefficient friends—he turned from a world, that to him was a universal blank, to the muse that sits among the cherubim;—and she caught him into heaven! The clouds that obscured his vision upon earth, instantaneously vanished before the blaze of celestial effulgence, and his eyes opened at once upon all the glories and the terrors of the Almighty—the seats of eternal beatitude and bottomless perdition. What, though to look upon the face of this earth was still denied, what was it to him, that one of the outcast atoms of creation was concealed from his view, when the Deity permitted the muse to unlock his mysteries, and disclose to the poet the recesses of the universe—when she bade his soul expand into its immensity, and enjoy as well its horrors as its magnificence! What was it to him that he had ‘fallen upon evil days and evil tongues,’ for the muse could transplant his spirit into the bowers of Eden, where the frown of fortune was disregarded, and the weight of incumbent infirmity forgotten in the smile that beamed on primeval innocence, and the tear that was consecrated to man’s first disobedience.”

Now, let any one contrast the influence emanating

from the perusal of *such* poetry,* with that produced by reading the pages of perverted and polluting sentimentalism—let him consider how every better feeling is cherished, and every better purpose strengthened by the one; and how the mind of the other is dazzled into the admiration of what it ought to despise, or seduced into the love of what it ought to hate—and then let him calculate the result of these different styles of poetry, in the estimate of character and happiness which they must produce, and the habits and actions to which they must lead; and can it, for a moment, be questioned, that poetry, when consecrated in the service of the sanctuary, is a most valuable handmaid of religion, and benefactress of mankind; but when prostituted to the service of Satan, is one of his most powerful instruments, especially with the young, the imaginative, and the ardent, for corrupting their principles, and destroying their immortal souls!

From all this we see how needful it is, for the formation of the Christian character and the attainment of true happiness, that the imagination be purified in its influences, directed to suitable objects, and kept within proper bounds. And it is in all these respects that the religion of the Gospel, by supplying the most delightful, and at the same time sanctifying, provision for the exercise of this faculty, contributes so importantly to the happiness of the heart in which it dwells. By means of this faculty, when purified by the Spirit of God, and directed to the Sacred Oracles which contain the revelation of His will, and the manifestation of His love, whether amidst the

* Hear the testimony of Henry Martyn on this interesting subject:—
“Since I have known God in a saving manner, painting, poetry, and music have had charms unknown to me before. I have received what I suppose is a taste for them; for religion has refined my mind, and made it susceptible of impressions from the sublime and beautiful. Oh! how religion secures the heightened enjoyment of those pleasures which keep so many from God by their becoming a source of pride!”

twilight shadows of the Old, or the clear sunshine of the New Testament dispensation, we can identify ourselves, as it were, with all the interesting incidents recorded in the history of patriarchs and prophets—of saints and apostles—and especially of the adorable Redeemer Himself. By means of a sanctified imagination, we can also grasp all the glories that are predicted as the bright inheritance of the Church of Christ in the millennial age. We can even ascend up to heaven, and catch a glimpse of the yet brighter glories within the veil. We can behold the “multitude that no man could number, surrounding the throne, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands.” We can see their sparkling countenances radiant with celestial splendour!—we can hear their rapturous voices thrilling with celestial joy!—we can listen to, and unite with, the songs of praise with which they cast their crowns at the feet of Him who sitteth on the throne, and who has bought them with His own most precious blood!

Thus, whatever way we look, to the scenes of the past or the future, as presented to our view in the word of God, we shall find the richest and most glorious materials for the elevating and gladdening exercise of the imagination. If we look back we can watch, by means of the imagination, the gradual progress of the work of creation—see the light starting forth at the divine command, and out of a chaos of confusion the fair fabric of this goodly world rising in harmony and beauty before our enchanted gaze—while, with enraptured ear, we hear “the morning stars singing together, and all the sons of God shouting for joy.” We can transport ourselves into the garden of Paradise before sin had blighted its bloom; and see our first parents, in primeval innocence, walking with angels and the God of angels in holy and happy fellowship amidst its bowers of bliss! We can watch the ark riding in safety over the waters of a deluged

world, and resting, when the floods had dried up, on the lofty mountain-top, which Noah hallowed as an altar to the Lord. We can accompany the father of the faithful in every step of his journey to Mount Moriah, and share every fluctuation of his feelings as he travels onward with bleeding heart, yet unfaltering faith, to sacrifice his son—his only son! We can meditate with Isaac in the fields at even-tide; and behold the angels ascending and descending on the mysterious ladder in Jacob's dream. We can follow his darling son—his beloved Joseph, through all the varying vicissitudes of his history, from the moment he was thrust down into the pit, till the moment he was raised to Egypt's throne, and onward to the close of his eventful life! And where can imagination find a history to feast upon, that will supply such exquisite enjoyment—so full of the most interesting incidents, and told with such touching pathos—such exquisite simplicity, as the history of Joseph's life? By means of the imagination we can witness, with exulting joy, the rescue of God's favoured people from Egyptian bondage, and share their triumph over Pharaoh and all his hosts at the Red Sea. We can travel with Israel in all their wanderings through the wilderness—see the light of the guiding pillar brightening out their way—hear the refreshing sound of the water as it gushes from the smitten rock—and enter with them into the possession of the promised land.

I need not expatiate further in detail on the delight with which imagination vividly portrays to the mind's eye every recorded incident in the life of Moses or Joshua—of Samson or Samuel—Elijah or Elisha—or the man after God's own heart. But it is when a sanctified imagination, with reverential awe and adoring love follows the footsteps of the Son of God through all the various events of His pilgrimage of mercy here below, it is then emphati-

cally, that she drinks her deepest draughts of bliss! Then she seems indeed to soar on seraph-wing and to infuse heaven's own element of holy joy into the Christian's purified soul!

Those, and those alone, fully know what power imagination has to fill the human heart with purest sweetest happiness, who have employed it with sober and sanctified, yet intense and all-absorbing interest, in embodying to the mind's eye every scene in the history of the divine Saviour, from His cradle to His cross! None—none can tell, but they who have felt, what a tide of unutterable joy is poured into the Christian's bosom, when, in the visions of a hallowed imagination, he gazes on his beloved Saviour cradled in the manger—or worshipped by the wise men from the east—or gathering the lambs in His arms—or feeding thousands with a few loaves—or walking with His disciples through the fields of Judea, pointing them, for lessons of trust in His love and care, to the lilies that grew near, or the birds that flew past them in their walk—or wiping away the tears of the widow of Nain—or weeping beside the grave of Lazarus—or walking in calm majesty on the stormy sea—or giving sight to the blind, health to the diseased, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead! Or when, with thrilling wonder, imagination watches Him in His conflict with Satan on the Mount of Temptation—or, with dazzled eye, contemplates the outbursting glory of the Godhead breaking through the veil of flesh on the Mount of Transfiguration—or sits down with Him in silent sorrow at His last supper with His beloved disciples—or follows Him with trembling awe and tearful sympathy, into the Garden of Gethsemane—or looks on Him, with speechless adoration or gratitude, lifted up on the cross of Calvary, amidst the gloom that gathers round the mount! Or when she watches Him, with triumphant joy, rising from the sepulchre—or journeys in sweet

companionship with Him to Emmaus—or goes up with Him, in mingled grief and gladness, to the Mount of Olivet, to catch there the last smile of His love, the last sound of His voice on earth, as, in the act of blessing His disciples, He ascended up into heaven, and a cloud received Him out of their sight! Or when she follows Him, with exulting faith, up to His mediatorial throne, to see Him seated at the right hand of the Father; and hear Him there lifting up the voice of intercession for His people; and there with Him, in holy communion of spirit, continually to dwell! Oh! when imagination is *thus* employed, does not the glory of God sparkle round the scenes she unfolds to the view, and the bliss of heaven mingle with the joys she pours into the heart?

And while imagination thus administers to the believer's enjoyment, by embodying the various interesting incidents in the Saviour's history, which all remind him, as they pass before his view, of that Saviour's love, she no less ministers to his sanctification, by thus, as it were, bringing him in closer contact and more intimate communion with the Saviour's character, whose divine features are, by this constant companionship with Jesus, through the medium of a sanctified imagination, so attractively exhibited before the mental eye. And thus, the power of the Holy Spirit, sanctifying this instrumentality, moulds him into a nearer resemblance to that image in conformity to which, as we have already shown, the very essence of his happiness, and of his meetness for heaven, consists. The same observation will apply, in a subordinate degree, to the beneficial influence of a hallowed imagination, in connexion with every character, whether in the Old or New Testament dispensation, which shines with celestial lustre, caught by reflection from the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. In this way the faith, the piety, the zeal, of patriarchs and prophets of old—in this way,

the holy lives and heavenly characters of a Saint Peter, a Saint John, and a Saint Paul, will be made to minister most abundantly at once to the believer's sanctified enjoyment, and increased meetness for his inheritance among the saints in light.

If now, from the scenes of the past we turn to the future, here also a sanctified imagination will find fields of view to expatiate in, where she can spread her wings for her loftiest and most delightful range, and feast herself on the loveliest visions that her enraptured gaze can desire to contemplate. What can exceed, what can equal the scenes of beauty and bliss which the prophetical sketch of the millennial glory unfolds to the eye of a hallowed imagination! Survey those scenes, as depicted in the volume of inspiration, or as delineated, in reflected splendour, in the page of the poet of Christianity, the sainted Cowper; and what poet of mere earthly imaginings, however brilliant his genius, ever pictured such scenes of surpassing loveliness, as the prospects of millennial beauty and blessedness present to the view? Conceive this earth restored to more than its primeval glory—every trace of sin's desolating blight entirely effaced—harmony re-established among all the tribes of animals that now live at enmity together—all the inhabitants of our world, constituting one happy family of love, renewed in the divine image, in the beauty of holiness—angels once more walking in sweet and sacred fellowship with man, amidst the bowers of a second paradise—and, above all, the Lord of angels, irradiating every scene of beauty and every source of bliss, by the glory of His presence, and the heaven of His smile! Conceive what must be the happiness of our regenerated earth, when the voice of discord shall no more be heard in its dwellings, but universal love, and joy, and gladness, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. For, in that blissful era,

“One song shall employ all nations, and all cry,
Worthy the Lamb! for He was slain for us!
The dwellers in the vale, and on the rocks,
Shout to each other, and the mountain-tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
Till, nation after nation taught the strains,
Earth rolls the rapturous Hosanna round.”

Now just conceive the feelings of the Christian, gazing on *such* scenes, and listening to *such* sounds, in the visions of a hallowed imagination, and say, is it not *then* that imagination unveils her brightest glories to the human eye, and pours her purest pleasures into the human heart? Or if she *has* brighter glories, and purer pleasures to boast, is it not when she lifts her enraptured votary, on soaring wing, up to the heaven of heavens—shows him the countless ranks of shining ones, cherubim and seraphim, that surround the Throne of God—breathes into his ears the more than mortal melody which is poured forth by numbers without number, encircling that Throne, and blending all their voices in one full burst of adoration and praise to Him who sitteth thereon; while, clear and loud, above all the host of heaven, is heard the voice of the innumerable company of the redeemed, singing that new song which none but they can sing, and which, in one sense, exalts their joy above the joy of angels, while they cry out—“Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain *for us!* Worthy the Lamb to receive honour, and praise, and glory, and blessing, for ever and ever!”

Need we compare the enjoyment which the imagination, when her inspiration, however fervid, and her visions, however bright, are altogether of the earth, can pour into her most enthusiastic votary’s heart, with the enjoyment which she pours into the Christian’s, when she thus transports him to heaven, introduces him among the choir of angels, and enables him to catch glimpses of the glory and strains of the music round the throne of God; more especially

when we remember that faith, while thus feasting on the glorious sights and sounds which a sanctified imagination brings within her reach, gives also to the believer the blissful assurance, that yet a little, and the scene, thus glorious in vision, shall be unveiled in all its splendours to his emancipated spirit's gaze; and he shall join that glorious multitude, and shall unite his voice with theirs in that sweet song, and shall partake himself of all the pure and satisfying pleasures which imagination, purified and illumined by the Holy Ghost, here presents to his view, as enjoyed by the spirits that dwell continually in the light of God's countenance! And thus, while imagination unveils heaven to his eye, at the same time faith, purifying his heart, while reminding him that this heaven is to be his own eternal home, increases his meetness for its high and holy songs and services, and enables him even on earth to foretaste its everlasting fulness of joy.

When we consider, as we before observed, what an important rank the imagination holds among the faculties of our nature, and what an important influence it exercises over our happiness, surely it ought to excite our gratitude to a gracious God, that He has made such abundant provision, in His own blessed word, in its recorded history of the past, and its prophetic picture of the future, for the more than innocent, the salutary and sanctifying enjoyment of a faculty, which, according to its right or wrong employment, must be productive of so much good or ill—must administer so extensively to our weal or wo.

The peculiar benefit which results from this sanctified use of the imagination, thus expatiating through the hallowed field of Scripture narrative and Scripture prophecy, is, that it tends directly, when thus employed, to promote heavenly-mindedness—to stir up the believer to increased exertions, for the accomplishment of predicted millennial glories, and the at-

tainment of the highest degree of meetness for the enjoyments of a holy heaven, and to invigorate him for the discharge of his various appointed duties, by the strength and refreshment which are supplied by the foretaste of celestial happiness, on which the imagination delights to feast.

The importance of this consideration will yet more fully appear, if we contrast the influence of the indulgence of the imagination in the fields of fictitious sentimentalism, with that which results from its indulgence in the fields of scriptural truth. Of a large class of novels, we would say in the words of a distinguished Christian writer, "They corrupt the taste, pollute the heart, debase the mind, demoralize the conduct! They bring all the high faculties of the soul into subjection to an imagination, which they have first made wild, insane, and uncontrollable. They generate a morbid sickly sentimentalism, instead of a just and lovely sensibility. A wise man should despise them, and a good man should abhor them."

These observations will emphatically apply to a style of writing which is becoming alarmingly prevalent in our day, and which is pre-eminently calculated to degrade the intellect, deprave the taste, and destroy all sobriety, seriousness, and spirituality of feeling. In this class of works, the whole object appears to be, to excite the risible faculties, by exhibiting every thing in a ludicrous aspect or association. No sense of religious obligation seems to be entertained—no standard even of moral principle is held up—all is frolic, adventure, gaiety, and mirth. The great aim seems to be to represent life as a comedy, or rather as a farce, whose scenes are got up entirely to provoke a laugh. Now this might have been suitable enough in an Epicurean of old, whose favourite maxim it was, "Let us eat, and drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die!"—but it is

awfully unsuitable in the professing followers of a crucified Saviour, to whom their divine Master has addressed the solemn admonition, "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."—"Be sober, be watchful; for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh." I cannot conceive a more mischievous style of writing, especially to the young, the inexperienced, and the ardent. It indisposes the mind for all sober reflection, or religious meditation. It tends totally to destroy all seriousness of spirit, or solidity of character. It unfits for the vigorous discharge of the duties of this world, and obliterates all thoughts of the necessity of preparing to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. It gives a radically wrong view of the object of life and the sources of happiness. It creates a taste for wild adventures and reckless frolic—a thirst for carnal mirth and sensual indulgences—and a tendency to look at every thing in a ridiculous light, as if the great purpose of existence was to laugh away our lives, and banish every solemn reflection from our minds. I have already said that I am no enemy to social cheerfulness; no advocate for monastic gloom. Yet I cannot forbear asking the question—*Is ours a world for such an exhibition as this?* What! A world which sin has blighted with its curse, which sorrow has turned into a wilderness, and the anger of its Maker has darkened with the shadow of death! A world which is to all who dwell in it the threshold of eternity, and which must be to each of us individually the portal of heaven or the vestibule of hell! A world whose crimes drew down its Creator from heaven to the cross, and in whose inhabitants' startled ears we know not how soon the awful voice of the archangel may cry out—"Behold! the Bridegroom cometh! go ye forth to meet Him!"

Is *this* a world in which we have nothing to do

but laugh, and dance, and sing, and run riot in wild frivolity and ungodly mirth?—we, who are sent into it to glorify God, to benefit mankind, and to secure an eternity of happiness—we, for whose redemption from sin and ruin God's co- eternal Son descended from heaven, and sorrowed, and suffered, and bled, and died upon earth! Should we, who are standing every instant on the very brink of eternity, and know not the moment we may enter (if not sheltered in a Saviour's arms) on a world of everlasting wo—should we pursue a wild career of reckless gaiety, forgetful alike of all that concerns us as mortal, yet immortal beings—of God, of death, of judgment, of eternity? Oh! does it not well become us to be serious in such a world as this? Is not God in earnest in beseeching of us not to neglect the great salvation of His well-beloved Son? Was not the Son of God in earnest when He died for our redemption on the cross? Is not the Holy Spirit in earnest in entreating of us to flee from the wrath to come? Is not Satan in earnest in seeking to seduce and to destroy our undying souls? Is not heaven, with its everlasting joys, and hell, with its everlasting horrors—oh! are not these serious things, when we reflect, that in one or the other we *must* take up our everlasting abode? And does it then become us to be triflers in such circumstances as these? If we have no well grounded hope of an interest in Christ, and through Him of an eternity of happiness, is not the poor maniac dancing in his chains, in frenzied excitement, on a precipice's brink, a feeble emblem of our madness, sporting in wild and wanton merriment on the very brink of hell? And can there be a class of writings more ruinous to our best interests than that which would encourage us to pursue this fatal career; and to indulge in thoughtless gaiety, while hurrying with unsteady step along the very margin of the lake that burns

with fire unquenchable? Alas! what incalculable injury, little thought of, and I would fain hope as little designed by those who indulge in them, are such writings calculated to inflict, more especially on the youthful mind! Surely, if its authors would seriously lay this to heart, no bribe of popularity or pecuniary profit would be powerful enough to induce them to be guilty of such fearful cruelty to their fellow-travellers to eternity!

But there is a different class of fictitious stories, which though not chargeable with such appalling consequences, is attended with peculiar faults and dangers of its own; and in reference to this class, which I would designate as the sentimental, I would now offer a few observations.

One of the most injurious effects which such works of fiction produce, is the excitement of a feeling of disrelish and distaste for the ordinary scenes and duties of domestic life. A vitiated taste for the romantic is generated. The scenes delineated in such works are so full of incident and interest, and are depicted in such attractive colouring, that the scenes of common-place life appear, in the comparison, "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable."

The imagination is so fascinated by the descriptions of ideal beauty, and interesting adventures, and romantic sentiment, with which such works abound, that it looks on the routine of real life, and its every-day duties, as insupportably insipid and wearisome. Like a vitiated appetite, which cannot relish plain food, but requires to be stimulated by highly seasoned dishes, the taste of the enthusiastic lover of fiction, whether in poetry or prose, disdishes the simple pleasures of ordinary life, and can only be satisfied with high-wrought sensibilities and scenes, which administer gratification to its appetite for the extravagancies of romance. Now, as the great bulk of life, in most instances, is made up of

common-place incidents and unromantic feelings, it is obvious that those who desire to live in an ideal world, peopled with such characters, and fraught with such adventures as the pages of fiction supply, must be subject to a sensation of perpetual disappointment and disgust, arising from the contrast between the life of reality and the life of romance.

It is this which constitutes the essential mischief of novel reading. There is a fatal fascination in this species of fiction, by which the imagination of the enthusiast is, as it were, spell-bound, and feels itself alike unwilling and unable to dissolve the charm, which makes the ideal world, thus pictured before the mind, appear to the enraptured eye like enchanted ground.

To break away from this scene of enchantment, and engage in the every-day concerns of this un-sentimental world, and hold converse with the every-day characters with which it abounds, seems to such a spirit insufferably tiresome. The melancholy result is, that domestic blessings, which ought to excite the warmest gratitude, are thanklessly received. Domestic duties, in the affectionate and faithful discharge of which, on Christian principles, true happiness consists, are entirely neglected, or heartlessly performed. The real wants and woes of the surrounding children of poverty and suffering are left unsoothed and unrelieved, while the heart wastes its sympathy on fictitious sorrows; and thus, by a process which the constitution of our nature will explain to a philosopher, (as the profound Butler has shown in his admirable *Analogy*,) and which the experience of every devoted novel reader must painfully confirm, in proportion as the heart is more habituated to expend its sensibilities on sentimental sorrows, it becomes more hardened and insensible to the appeals of real grief.

It ought not to be overlooked, in considering this

subject, that the poison of this style of reading operates most powerfully on the very individuals whose mental system is most susceptible of its infectious influence, from a pre-disposition to the disease which novel-reading is so fearfully fitted to engender and to increase. It is those whose too ardent imaginations would require rather to be sobered by solid instruction, and, in some cases, even steadied by the severer sciences, than to be stimulated by over-wrought pictures of romantic sentimentalism, who will most delight to indulge in this dangerous, because to them intoxicating draught. Their diseased imagination (for when this faculty is not purified, and regulated by religious principle, it is always diseased) prompts them to devour this highly seasoned, but most unwholesome food, which in return feeds the disease that prompts the desire for this perniciously stimulating style of work. Thus the desire and the indulgence act on each other, as reciprocally cause and effect, and the "increase of appetite" for such reading "but grows by what it feeds upon." These mischievous consequences are chargeable even against those works of fiction, in which, while the imagination is dangerously inflamed, there is no violation of purity—no seductive voluptuousness. For where the tendency of fictitious composition, whether in verse or prose, is to foster *such* a spirit, it must be regarded as one of Satan's most effective instruments for debauching the imagination, and thus destroying the soul! And it cannot surely be deemed necessary to warn any *real* Christian against a species of reading which offers such a peculiar insult to the God of purity, and stains, with such sullying defilement, that purity of heart which must be so carefully cultivated by all who desire to see a holy God, either in His partial manifestation of divine grace on earth, or the fuller manifestation of His glory in heaven! In truth,

with such a nature as ours, even when renewed by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, to venture on *such* reading as suggests impure thoughts, or insinuates a voluptuous spirit, is an act of suicidal guilt and madness, against which we would affectionately and solemnly warn all that bear the Christian name, and do not deliberately prefer the suggestions of Satan to the commands of God !

There is one class of fictitious narratives, in regard to which, as I am led to the consideration of the subject, I would desire to subjoin a few words of friendly caution to the Christian reader. I allude to fictitious narratives of a religious character, in the perusal of which much circumspection is required, and much moderation should be employed. I am far, indeed, from thinking, that there is any reasonable or scriptural objection, to employing fiction as a vehicle for the conveyance and inculcation of religious truth. The parables of our blessed Lord (which there is every reason to believe are fictitious stories) appear decisively to warrant the employment of fiction as a medium of religious instruction. And the example thus given by the highest of all authorities has been, in many instances, most happily and successfully followed by Christian authors, who have combined the charms of a brilliant imagination with soundness of judgment and sobriety of spirit; and thus enlisted in the service of the sanctuary that love of interesting narrative, and delight in the embellishments of graceful composition, which are so closely interwoven into the very texture of our mental frame. Need I do more, to substantiate this assertion, than allude to that

“ Ingenious dreamer, in whose well-told tale
Sweet fiction and sweet truth alike prevail—
Whose humorous vein, strong sense, and simple style,
May teach the gayest—make the gravest smile;
Witty, and well employed, and, like his Lord,
Speaking in parables His slighted word.”

Who that loves the Saviour's name but must echo
the heart-felt tribute, thus paid to Bunyan, by the
saintly Cowper, and, with him,

“Revere the man, whose *pilgrim* marks the road,
And guides the *progress* of the soul to God!”

But while I thus gladly appeal to his exquisite allegory, as a proof how effectually fiction may be made to subserve the cause of truth, I cannot refrain from subjoining an admonitory hint to those who may be disposed to indulge too largely in a style of religious reading which requires to be rather sparingly enjoyed, and its results to be very carefully watched.

There can be no doubt, that an excessive indulgence in the perusal of works of religious fiction, (to which many professing Christians, in our day, are I fear quite too prone,) tends to generate a species of sentimental piety which may be easily mistaken for that devoted love to the Saviour, and zeal for His glory, without which all religious profession is an empty name. The characters are often delineated with such extravagant colouring; as monsters of faultless perfection, and the scenes described with such romantic interest, as surpassingly strange or delightful, that the Christian characters and scenes which real life exhibits, appear in the comparison unattractive and uninteresting. The inconsistencies that the former exhibit, and the revolting circumstances by which the latter are so often accompanied, in the abodes of actual wretchedness, excite dissatisfaction and disgust. The pleasure derived from the perusal of a well-told tale, diversified with striking incidents, and rendered entertaining by the development of the characters and destiny of the different personages, introduced into the story, is fearfully liable to be mistaken for a harmony of sentiment with the piety which per-

vades the work. And thus the reader is in danger of being satisfied with his own state, because he finds himself capable of sympathizing with the spiritual joys and sorrows of the religious characters whose history he is engaged in studying. The truth may be, that what awakens and sustains his interest in the work, is exclusively the *story*, altogether independent of its religious complexion. And thus may a most dangerous delusion be fostered, by an unrenewed mind being led to mistake its real condition, and to fancy itself influenced by a vital principle of godliness, *because* it relishes a narrative of scenes and characters in which that principle prevails. One of the surest tests, by which the sincerity of this supposed congeniality with those characters and scenes may be ascertained, is, whether there is a proportionable pleasure in secret communion with God by prayer, and in the private perusal of the word of God? For we may feel assured, that if, while our interest in reading a religious work of fiction is very intense, communion with God in prayer, and the perusal of His word, are felt to be wearisome, we are either deceiving ourselves in the idea that we are spiritually alive at all, or our spiritual life is at a low ebb indeed. Nor should we ever indulge the hope that any style of religious reading is profitable to us, if we do not find that it additionally endears to us the word of God, and leads us to study that blessed book with increased relish and delight.

We would therefore affectionately caution the Christian reader against *indulging* in a taste for religious fiction, in preference to those more solid and sober religious works, which tend to invigorate the mind, to regulate the passions, and give firmness and stability to the character.

We would say to him—Be much in the study of more practical and profitable works, especially those

of the older divines. They will furnish you with substantial and really nutritious food for your mind. Familiarize yourself with those writers in whose pages you will find the precious truths of the Gospel enforced with seriousness, faithfulness, and impressiveness; and at the same time recommended by the subordinate attractions of talent and taste. Select, as your favourite companions, the works of Latimer and Ridley, of Jewell and Reynolds, of Beveridge and Baxter, of Hall and Hooker, of Watts and Doddridge, of Usher and Leighton; or those later lights of the church—Flavel and Fletcher, Walker and Hervey, Gurnall and Edwards, Newton and Romaine, Searle and Howe, Scott and Henry, Venn and Leigh Richmond, Cecil and Simeon, Martyn, Wilberforce, and Hannah More. Or, to name but a few living authors, whose pages will supply equal profit and delight, study with attention the writings of Sumner and Chalmers, Bickersteth and Taylor, O'Brien and Abercrombie, M'Neile and Bradley, Charlotte Elizabeth and Caroline Fry, Cunningham and Close, Bridges and Blunt. Christian Biography will also furnish a rich feast of profitable and pleasurable reading, far more improving, and, to a sound and well regulated mind, more interesting than the pages of religious fiction can supply. Milner's Church History will open a wide field for delightful study; and Edwards on Redemption will develop, in the most attractive manner, God's providential government of the world, in connexion with the glorious scheme of redeeming love. Horne's Introduction to the critical Study of the Scriptures is a condensed library of religious knowledge. The lives of distinguished missionaries, especially Brainerd and Elliott, Swartz and Martyn, Carey and Morrison, and the records of missionary labours, particularly, Ellis' and Williams', will supply safe and even salutary gratification for that love of

strange and interesting adventures, which is so natural to the youthful mind. But there is one work, I would emphatically recommend to the young and imaginative Christian, as it combines all the fascinations of romantic fiction, with all the solidity of historical truth, and recommends evangelical sentiments by the charms of a vigorous and attractive style. I need scarcely add, that I mean D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation. While, however, we thus recommend to the Christian, other styles of religious reading, above all we should say, let the Bible be to you the book of books—"your guide, companion, and familiar friend!" Gather in this field every morning the daily portion of heavenly manna, to sustain and nourish your soul to everlasting life! Here, too, to take but a glance at the diversified character of its contents—you will find suitable provision for every faculty, every taste. The Bible is, in fact, a divine Encyclopædia in itself. It contains *history*, the most authentic and ancient, tracing back to the first creation of our world; and *prophecy*, the most important and interesting, tracing forward to its final consummation; *journeys*, surpassing all others in the marvellousness of their adventures, and the dignity of their guide, for they were marked by miracles at every step, and in every movement directed by God; the *travels* of the most distinguished missionaries, the first preachers of the Gospel; and the *lives* of the most illustrious personages, including the biography of the Son of God; *events*, more wonderful than romance ever imagined; and *stories*, more fascinating than fancy ever sketched; the finest specimens of *poetry* and *eloquence*, of sound *philosophy* and solid *argument*; *models* of virtue, the most attractive; and *maxims* of wisdom, the most profound; forms of *prayer*, the most appropriate in every variety of spiritual experience; and songs of

praise, that would not be unworthy of an angel's tongue—*precepts* of unparalleled importance; and *parables* of unrivalled beauty; *examples* of consistent piety, suited to every situation; and *lessons* of divine instruction, adapted to every age!

But, above all, this blessed book deserves and demands your persevering and prayerful study, because it reveals the only way of salvation, by testifying of Him who is the only Saviour—who is Himself “the Way, the Truth, and the Life”—the Alpha and Omega of a sinner's hopes—the sum and substance of a sinner's salvation! This is the only book in which you are certain of finding “truth without any mixture of error”—the only one which you are sure that the Holy Spirit has indited by His infallible inspiration, and whose devout perusal, engaged in with prayer for His divine teaching, He has promised and pledged Himself to bless!

Beware, then, of substituting any style of religious reading, however excellent in itself, for the perusal of the word of God! If you do so, that God, who is jealous of the honour of His own word, will withhold His blessing from the book (were it even the most spiritual and heavenly-minded ever composed by uninspired man) which is allowed to usurp, in your regard and study, the place which is exclusively the prerogative of the oracles of divine truth. The consequence will be, that, however you may be amused, you will not be profited by such reading. Unaccompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, it will not communicate a single particle of spiritual strength or refreshment to your soul. The light that shines on the pages of the book, however brilliant, will not warm your heart with a Saviour's love. No dew of divine grace will distil from its leaves, however rich in piety or genius, to revive your drooping soul. Try then, I would affectionately advise you, the effect of

all your religious reading by the test I have proposed—what influence it appears to exercise over your relish for the reading of the Bible.

If you find a decided increase in your taste for the study of this blessed book; if you feel it to be more precious to your soul; that your desire for it is quickened, and your delight in it deepened; then may you hope that a blessing is resting on whatever religious works you are studying, when they are thus regarded, and valued only as handmaids to the word of God. But if you find a contrary effect produced; that you take up the religious work, especially if it be a work of fiction, with desire, peruse it with delight, and lay it down with regret, while you commence the study of the Bible with reluctance, continue it with wearisomeness, and close it with a feeling of satisfaction because the task, which conscience compelled you to undertake, is finished, then, be assured, your religious reading, however excellent in itself, or fascinating in its effects, is unattended with the blessing of God, or any profit to your own soul.

CHAPTER XIV.

THEATRICAL AMUSEMENTS.

BEFORE I close this part of our subject, I would briefly advert to a species of intellectual enjoyment peculiarly attractive, but proportionably injurious, against which I would lift up my humble voice in the language of the most unqualified condemnation, as a species of intellectual gratification altogether incompatible with the spirit of watchfulness which the Christian ought habitually to cherish, and with the obligation which he owes to his Divine Re-

deemer's love. I mean theatrical amusements. How can I, as an ambassador of Christ, speak otherwise of an amusement which tends to thwart the very purpose for which the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind, lived a life of sorrow, and died a death of shame!—an amusement which is so impregnated with the spirit of voluptuousness that it necessarily tends to give the sensual part of our nature a fearful predominance over the spiritual, and to kindle the sparks of sinful passions within us into an unhallowed flame!—an amusement where every thing that can excite and stimulate a wanton imagination and wanton appetites, is made to minister to the gratification of those feelings which Christianity calls on us to crucify!—an amusement, where the ear of modesty is insulted by language that no man would dare to address in society to any correct female; and the eye wounded by witnessing scenes which no virtuous woman should ever be allowed to see; where the meaning of the indelicate innuendo is made disgustingly plain by the unequivocal interpretation of improper looks and gestures, and the virgin purity of the youthful mind is sullied by allusions and exhibitions which must leave a polluting stain on the mirror of the soul!—an amusement, where the name of God is blasphemed, and the solemnities of worship profaned by being used, not in seriousness of spirit, but for the purposes of entertainment, unaccompanied by a trace of reverential feeling towards Him who has declared, that He will in no wise hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain!—an amusement which fearfully perils the immortal souls of those engaged in its representations by familiarizing them with scenes, and exposing them to snares, that render the escape of its youthful members from the contagious influence of surrounding licentiousness a kind of moral miracle, the preservation of female virtue most frightfully hazardous, and the ex-

istence and growth of religious feeling, may we not say, an actual impossibility, in the very nature of things!—an amusement which holds up a standard of morality diametrically opposed to the standard of the Gospel; exhibiting a haughty, resentful spirit, firing up at the appearance of an affront, as the object of admiration; and a meek, forgiving spirit, bearing injuries and insults with uncomplaining patience, as the object of contempt!—an amusement, in fine, which (I do not hesitate to assert my deliberate conviction) is calculated to cherish every feeling which Christianity forbids, and to discountenance every disposition which Christianity desires to promote!

Oh! how can professing Christians patronise such an amusement as this! How can those who love the Saviour take pleasure in a recreation which tends to defeat the very design for which that Saviour lived and died on earth! How can Christian parents bring their sons and daughters into scenes where they are compelled to listen to language the most offensive to youthful modesty, and to witness exhibitions that must sully the purity of the youthful mind! How can those who reverence Jehovah sanction by their presence a place where His name is blasphemed! or those who know the preciousness and power of prayer, tolerate the awful mockery of the solemnities of worship which the theatre presents! How can those whose paramount aim should be to promote the everlasting welfare of their fellow-creatures, do all they can to ruin the immortal souls of multitudes of their fellow-travellers to eternity, by encouraging an amusement which exposes its performers and its votaries to such fearful peril of everlasting destruction, in that place of torment “where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!” And how can those who are bound by every tie of gratitude for a Saviour’s love to uphold

the Gospel-standard of morality, sanction a system of morals which, in every essential feature, is the very opposite of that which the Gospel has set up ! And, above all, how can those who profess to be looking and longing for the “ appearing of the great God, our Saviour,” and to know neither the day nor the hour in which He may appear, and who have heard from His lips the solemn warning—“ Surely I come quickly: watch, therefore, and be ye always ready !”—oh ! how can *they* ever be found in a place where it would be a very mockery to pretend that they were watching for the coming of the Son of man ! What, what, I would ask, would be the feelings of a follower of the Saviour if he were to be surprised at the theatre by the sudden summons—“ Behold the Bridegroom is coming ! go ye out to meet Him !” Could he go forth at the startling cry with joy to meet his coming Lord ? Or could he hope, if surprised by *His* appearance in the midst of *such* a scene, for the blessedness promised to the servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find watching ?

I would confirm my opinion on this subject by the valuable testimony of that distinguished servant of God, the late Mr. Wilberforce, who, in his admirable “ Practical View of Christianity,” has left the following record of his protest against the stage :—

“ I am well aware that I am now about to tread on very tender ground ; but it would be an improper deference to the opinions and manners of the age altogether to avoid it. There has been much argument concerning the lawfulness of theatrical amusements. Let it be sufficient to remark, that the controversy would be short indeed, if the question were to be tried by this criterion of love to the Supreme Being. If there were any thing of that sensibility for the honour of God, and of that zeal in His service, which we show in behalf of our earthly friends, or of our political connexions, should we seek our pleasure in that place which the debauchee, inflamed with wine, or bent on the gratification of other licentious appetites, finds most congenial to his state and temper of mind ? In that place, from the neighbourhood of which (how justly termed a ‘ school of morals ’ might hence alone be inferred) decorum, and modesty,

and regularity retire, while riot and lewdness are invited to the spot, and invariably select it for their chosen residence : where the sacred name of God is often profaned ; where sentiments are often heard with delight, and motions and gestures often applauded, which would not be tolerated in private company, but which may far exceed the utmost license allowed in the social circle, without at all transgressing the large bounds of theatrical decorum: where, when moral principles are inculcated, they are not such as a Christian ought to cherish in his breast, but such as it must be his daily endeavour to extirpate ; not those which Scripture warrants, but those which it condemns as false and spurious, being founded in pride and ambition, and the over-valuation of human favours ; where, surely, if a Christian should trust himself at all, it would be requisite for him to prepare himself with a double portion of watchfulness and seriousness of mind, instead of selecting it as the place in which he may throw off his guard, and unbend without danger ! The justness of this last remark, and the general tendency of theatrical amusements, are attested by the same well-instructed master in the science of human life, to whom we had before occasion to refer. By him they are recommended as the most efficacious expedient for relaxing, among any people, that *precisioness and austerity of morals*, to use his own phrase, which, under the name of holiness, it is the business of Scripture to inculcate and enforce. Nor is this position merely theoretical. The experiment was tried, and tried successfully, in a city upon the Continent, in which it was wished to corrupt the simple morality of purer times. Let us try the question by a parallel instance.

“ What judgment should we form of the warmth of that man’s attachment to his sovereign, who, at seasons of recreation, should seek his pleasure in scenes so ill-accordant with the principle of loyalty, as those of which we have been speaking are with the genius of religion ! If, for the purpose, he were to select the place, and frequent the amusements to which Democrats and Jacobins should love to resort for entertainment, and in which they should find themselves so much at home, as invariably to select the spot for their abiding habitation ; where dialogue, and song, and the intelligible language of gesticulation, should be used to convey ideas and sentiments, not perhaps palpably treasonable, or falling directly within the strict precision of any legal limits, but yet, palpably contrary to the spirit of monarchical government : which, further, the highest authorities had recommended as sovereign specifics for cooling the warmth, and enlarging the narrowness, of an excessive loyalty ! What opinion should we form of the delicacy of that friendship, or of the fidelity of that love, which, in relation to their respective objects, should exhibit the same contradictions ? ”

Not less decided, and, if possible, even more valuable, is the testimony of one, whose writings furnish a most valuable treasury of sound practical theology ; and whose name will continue to be cherished with grateful admiration, and affectionate esteem, so long as this tribute shall continue to be

paid to talents and attainments of the very highest order, consecrated to the Saviour's service, and recommended by all the winning graces of the Christian character, and the consistent exhibition of a holy and devoted life. The testimony of Hannah More derives also peculiar force from the consideration, that, in addition to the high character and qualifications of the witness, her early prepossessions were in favour of the stage, and the first efforts of her genius enlisted in its cause.

This stamps on her protest against the theatre the peculiar value of a conviction forced on the mind in opposition to long-cherished opinions, by the irresistible power of Christian truth; and a concession, extorted from the conscience, in spite of the pleadings of early prepossessions, by the uncompromising demands of Christian principle. This protest is recorded in her admirable preface to the two tragedies which she wrote before the light of the Gospel had illuminated her understanding, or the love of the Saviour warmed her heart. The entire preface well deserves, and will richly repay, the attentive perusal of all who wish to form a right judgment in this matter. The following extract, referring to what will be at once admitted to be the least objectionable of dramatic representations, the productions of the tragic muse, will suffice to show the decided tone, and scriptural grounds, of her protest against theatrical amusements:—

“What I insist on is, that there almost inevitably runs through the whole web of the tragic drama, (for to this least blameable half of stage composition I confine my remarks, as against comedy still stronger objections may be urged,) a prominent thread of false principle. It is generally the leading object of the poet to erect a standard of honour in direct opposition to the standard of Christianity; and this is not done subordinately, incidentally, occasionally; but worldly honour is the very soul, spirit, and life-giving principle of the drama.

“Injured honour can only be vindicated at the point of the sword; the stains of injured reputation can only be washed out in blood. Love, jealousy, hatred, ambition, pride, revenge, are too often elevated into

the rank of splendid virtues, and form a dazzling system of worldly morality, in direct contradiction to the spirit of that religion whose characteristics are 'charity, meekness, peaceableness, long suffering, gentleness, forgiveness.'

"When it is recollected how many young men pick up their habits of thinking, and their notions of morality from the play house, it is not, perhaps, going too far to suspect that the principles and examples exhibited on the stage, may contribute, in their full measure and proportion, towards supplying a sort of regular aliment to the appetite (how dreadfully increased!) for duelling and even suicide. . . . The eloquent apologies, and the elaborate vindication of the crimes resulting from the point of honour, and the dread of shame, (and with such apologies and vindications some of our most approved pieces abound,) too temptingly invite the high unbroken spirit of a warm youth, from admiring such sentiments to adopt them; and when he hears the bursts of applause with which these sallies of resentment, these vows of vengeance, these determinations to destroy or be destroyed, this solemn obstesting the great Judge of hearts to witness the innocence of—perhaps a very criminal action or intention—are received by a transported audience, will it not operate as a kind of stimulus to him to adopt a similar conduct, should he ever be placed in similar circumstances? - A little tame tag of morality, set to a few musical periods by the unimpassioned friend, is borne down, absorbed, lost in the impetuous but too engaging character of the feeling fiery hero. The drowsy moral at the close slowly attempts to creep after the poison of the piece, but it creeps in vain: it can never expel that which it can never reach. Of course, the concluding antidote never defeats the mischief of the piece: the effect of the smooth moral is instantly obliterated, while that of the indented passion is perhaps indelible."

"Modesty," observes Doctor Bennett, in his able sermon on this subject, "constitutes the fairest charm of the female character—the diamond among pearls—without which beauty, however dazzling, or accomplishments, however brilliant, cannot command well-founded or permanent admiration and respect. But can this jewel remain untarnished amid scenes where profaneness and licentiousness reign triumphant? Let us make a reply from a justly popular writer (Mr. Gisborne)—' Among the usual causes by which female modesty is worn away, I know not one more efficacious than the indelicate scenes and language to which women are familiarized at the theatre. Nor among the causes by which simplicity of manners is corrupted—the habit of viewing, with complacency, persons of infamous character, is acquired—a variety of false principles is upheld—and pride in particular, under different forms and modifications, is encouraged—can there be named any one apparently more powerful than the stage?'

"Is it well to habituate the young female to expressions of equivocal, or sometimes very unequivocally improper meaning, until she ceases to blush at the indecency, having learned to be an actress herself, and to look as if she did not understand it? Parents! is *such* the education you wish to give your daughters?"

I will only add the testimony of an eminent mi-

nister of the Gospel, who has lately entered into the joy of his Lord—a man of truly apostolical character, whose opinion will have deserved weight with all, who knew how pre-eminently he was distinguished for the most ardent zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, regulated in all its movements by the sobriety of a sound mind, and sweetened in all its manifestations by the spirit of Christian love—the late Rev. Peter Roe. In one of his letters (see *Life*, p. 329—a work I would warmly recommend to all who desire to become more intimately acquainted with the heavenly character and devoted life of that eminent saint and servant of God,) he designates the theatre, “that place of folly, where not only the dresses, decorations, company, conversation, music, attitudes of the performers, are calculated to banish from the mind every serious, every chaste, every correct, I will not say religious thought, but where the glorious truth of God has been reviled—where the solemn demeanour which becomes those who have their treasure in heaven, has been mimicked—and where the humble followers of Jesus have been held up as objects only fit for the raillery of the infidel or the debauchee.” Again, (p. 332,) he observes:—

“Nothing more deceives the heart, as well as the imagination, than theatrical representations. They do indeed unfit the mind for reflection, meditation, and prayer. They keep eternity out of view; they generate or encourage false principles, and teach men to call evil good and good evil! ‘to put light for darkness and darkness for light,’ ‘bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.’ The time that ought to be redeemed is wasted by them; the talents that ought to be employed in the service and to the glory of God, are sacrificed at the shrine of folly, fashion, and impiety; and those who associate together, whether as the performers or the audience, in-

stead of provoking each other to love and good works, are fellow-helpers in a work of darkness, of sin, and of eventual misery, if not rescued by Almighty grace. At any time, and under any circumstances, plays must be regarded, to say the least of them, as a proof of human levity, folly, and infatuation ; and cannot at all consist with that soberness of mind which is so beautiful and distinguishing a trait of the Christian character. Many heathens regard them as incentives to vice, and therefore discarded them. Can they be right under the Christian dispensation ? We may well conceive how they would have been regarded by our Lord and His apostles—by the primitive Christians, and by the martyrs. Could the evangelization of sinners have proceeded, if those engaged in the glorious work had spent some of their time in theatrical pursuits ? On the contrary, if there had been no other impediment, would not this have been sufficient to stop this blessed work ?

“ It is, perhaps, impossible to convince the world of the evils of plays ; but it is easy to prove the inconsistency of professors. Upon no principle of sound reason or religion can they be defended ; and the voice of every lover of truth ought to be lifted up against them.”

Can any further testimony be required to prove the utterly anti-christian character of an amusement, which is so diametrically opposed to every principle the Gospel inculcates, and every purpose, for which its divine Author visited our world ?—an amusement which Satan has always employed, as one of his most successful instruments, for encompassing his victims with an atmosphere of earthliness ; perverting their principles, polluting their imaginations, and inflaming their passions ; enslaving their affections and appetites to the dominion of sense and the bondage of sin ; and thus extending

his empire of impiety and impurity upon earth ! Who, I repeat the question, who that loves the Saviour, can consistently sanction by his presence an amusement such as this ? Who that prizes female purity can consistently patronise its pollution ? Or who that reverences the name of Jehovah can consistently encourage its profanation ? Who that values the souls of his fellow-creatures can consistently peril their everlasting salvation for his own amusement ? Or who that desires to have his "conversation in heaven" can consistently visit a scene, which has proved to such numbers whom it has seduced from the paths of virtue, the very vestibule of hell ?

CHAPTER XV.

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE.

THE last point of view, in which I would desire to establish the superiority of the Christian over the worldling, in respect of the increased enjoyment, which the former is privileged to possess, of every purer source of earthly happiness, regards our social and domestic affections. Here also Christianity places her faithful votary on a high vantage ground above the most successful votary of the world. For when our social intercourse is regulated, and our domestic affections are sanctified, by Christian principles and Christian love, they are made capable of imparting a much higher degree of happiness than the social intercourse and domestic affections of the children of the world, under the most favourable circumstances, can supply.

Let us examine the matter, in the first instance, in reference to social intercourse. Now it is the

direct tendency of the religion of the Gospel, and its sure result, when cordially embraced, (as we have already shown,) to check all those selfish and unkind feelings which interrupt, and to cherish all those benevolent and tender emotions which promote the harmony of social intercourse, and thus to render it a source of the most refined and exalted pleasure. What is it that makes the social intercourse of the children of the world so often wearisome, if not actually painful? Is it not the prevalence of those passions, which are altogether unfriendly to social enjoyment? *Selfishness*, exclusively engaged in seeking its own gratification, regardless of the rights or the feelings of others—*pride*, jealous of its own pretensions to notice, envious of every mark of superior distinction bestowed on others, and ready to take affront at the slightest appearance of disrespect, or the neglect of the deference which it imagines it deserves—*vanity*, intent on displaying its own fancied merits, courting with eager solicitude the admiration of all around, and soured with sullen fretfulness, if disappointed in its mean ambition of applause! Is it to be wondered at that social enjoyment is a stranger to scenes, where passions so destructive of its very nature prevail? Is it to be wondered at that social happiness, which requires for its development an atmosphere of affection, should be blighted by an atmosphere so impregnated with selfishness and malignity as this? And who that knows any thing of the spirit which prevails in this selfish and ill-natured world, will deny that *such* is the atmosphere which they who mingle in its society must be content to breathe?

Now contrast with this the atmosphere which genuine Christianity sheds around the social intercourse of her true disciples, an atmosphere of love—divine, celestial love! In what light does she teach

all true Christians to regard each other? Is it not as the members of one family, all linked together in the closest bonds of hallowed affection? All children of the same Father, all followers of the same Saviour, all temples of the same Spirit, all travellers to the same home! How many, how endearing are the ties which unite in one all that love the same precious Redeemer; and throw around their social enjoyments a charm, which has indeed "less of earth in it than heaven!" "Wrecked by the same storm, and rescued by the same Redeemer," how does a sense of common peril, and common preservation, endear them to each other! Struggling against the same enemies, fighting under the same banners, what powerful sympathies unite the hearts of all the faithful fellow-soldiers of the cross! Their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears, their trials and consolations, their privileges and prospects, the same—how identifying is the bond of union, which makes them all "one in Christ!" They understand each other, they feel for each other, in a manner which the children of the world, so far from experiencing, cannot even comprehend. This gives to their social intercourse a sweetness peculiar to itself, partaking, as it does, so essentially of the Spirit of Christ, and the atmosphere of heaven! Conscious that Jesus loves them all with an equal because an infinite and everlasting love, they feel attracted to each other by a sweet and sacred affection, which His smile alone can impart!

Now, there are two circumstances which mainly contribute to render the social intercourse of Christians so peculiarly sweet and refreshing. One, at which we have already glanced, that it is so thoroughly impregnated with the spirit of love. This approximates their social converse to that of an attached family, whose members delight to enjoy to-

gether affectionate communion of heart, while conversing on themes of deep and equal interest to them all. All the bitternesses of envious and jealous feelings—all the contentious rivalries of vanity and pride—are banished from the hallowed circle where genuine Christianity presides. The spirit of selfishness gives place to that of Christian benevolence, delighting, by every tender ministration of Christ-like love, to contribute to the happiness of all who come within the sphere of its blessed influence. Conceive a little band of real Christians thus met together, to enjoy a few hours of social converse—their hearts glowing with the love of Him who died for them—their countenances beaming with the peace and joy which He alone can give—their voices eloquent in his praise! Oh! how swiftly fly the hallowed hours, while His love—that theme of which they never tire—engages every heart and tongue; or they study together His blessed word, and speak one to another of its precious promises and glorious prospects—or unite in social prayer—or blend their voices in the song of thanksgiving and praise—while He, of whom they thus delight to speak, joins Himself, as it were, to this little band of His disciples, and breathes His blessing over them, till the happiness of every heart, thus hallowed by His presence and approving smile, becomes a very antepast of the happiness of heaven. No need have they of those frivolous amusements which the children of the world have invented—

“To give time a shove,
And whirl them—happy riddance—from themselves!”

No need of the feverish or frenzied excitement of gambling, that fatal antidote to the insupportable *ennui* of fashionable life—which, in its mildest forms, is attended by irritability of temper, and discomposure of spirit—in its more aggravated

shape, with covetousness, envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness—and, in its full-grown stature of gigantic guilt, with fiendish malignity, and diabolical rage—irrevocable ruin and wild despair—deadly quarrels, often ending in bloodshed, and self-destruction both of body and soul. A pursuit which, more almost than any other, hardens the human heart into the callousness of cold misanthropy, and transforms the human soul into the very spirit of a fiend! A pursuit whose true origin and end its own wretched victims appear to appreciate and acknowledge, when they designate the place where the demon of gambling holds its infernal orgies, by the appropriate appellation of a *hell*!

Oh! with what shuddering abhorrence should every real Christian shrink back from the *remotest approach* to participating or countenancing such an amusement! And how must this view of the appalling evils attendant on *every* modification of gambling, lead all who love the Saviour to abstain from every game of chance, from every kind of lottery, from the race-course, and every sport where the spirit of gambling presides, since they must all, more or less, tend to produce some of its baneful effects.

And surely *they* can feel no want of the world's contrivances to kill time—as it is awfully expressed; no want of the giddy or the wanton dance, to impart the short-lived delirium of godless gaiety—no want of music which breathes the spirit of earthly passion—lavishing on the creature with idolatrous homage, the language of love and adoration, which is the exclusive prerogative of the Creator.

They do not want the excitement of false gaiety—for true happiness has taken up its peaceful abode in their hearts. They have no relish for the music which idolatrous passion would pour forth—for their ears drink in with sacred delight the melody which

rises, in songs of grateful adoration, before the throne of God! They do not indeed feel themselves debarred from conversation of a less serious stamp, provided the restraining and sanctifying spirit of the Gospel still presides—to prevent a tinge of what would sully the purity, or imbitter the kindness, that should ever characterize Christian intercourse. Often, in such happy meetings of a few attached Christian friends,

“Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth.”

No! no—all the varied stores of intellectual wealth—the discoveries of science—the treasures of knowledge—all the sweet cheerfulness that well becomes those who are at peace with God—all the enlivening and gladdening converse of hallowed affection are theirs to enjoy; ay, and with a relish, that hearts where the peace of God resides, alone can feel. But, while *such* themes are not proscribed, nor *such* cheerfulness forbidden, they delight most in the theme which a Saviour’s name endears to every heart, and cherish most the spirit of devout gratitude to the Lord they love. For they do not

“Madly, like an impious world,
Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
That made them an intruder on their joys,
Start at His awful name, or deem His praise
A jarring note.”

In truth, the grand discriminating distinction which separates between the social intercourse of the Christian and the worldling, and which gives such an immeasurable superiority to the former, as a source of happiness, consists in this—that it is the desire of the children of God, in all their social intercourse, to *remember God*, and to feel His presence and His smile to be the very soul, and sub-

stance, and brightener of all their enjoyment—while it is the special aim and object of the children of the world, in all *their* social intercourse, to *forget God*, and to shut Him out from their hearts and memories in all *their* recreations. Can any other consideration be necessary to prove how immense, how infinite must be the Christian's superiority over the worldling, in the enjoyments of social intercourse?

This is, in truth, the essential criminality of the amusements of the world, that they are systematically arranged on the plan, and for the purpose, of excluding God from the social circle, and enjoying happiness independently of Him. There is (as we have before remarked) a desire for happiness in the human heart, which was designed to draw us to God as the only object by whom it can be satisfied—a thirst for enjoyment, which was implanted to allure us to Him, as the only fountain where it can be quenched—a void which his love alone can fill. Now, worldly amusements are contrived for the express purpose of satisfying this desire, quenching this thirst, and filling up this void, to the exclusion of the blessed God.

They are, therefore, chargeable with the guilt of being a basely ungrateful contrivance, on the part of creatures who are literally loaded with tokens of the divine bounty, to be happy without *Him* who is the Source and Giver of all the blessings they enjoy. For will it not be admitted, that in those scenes of gaiety it would be out of place to advert to sacred subjects, to speak of the Saviour's love, or the Saviour's sufferings? And what a thought is this, to seek for enjoyment in a scene where you ought not to speak of the love of Him who, you believe, died for you? Now, not to dwell on the monstrous ingratitude of such an effort, (and what would an angel think of the attempt to be happy by forgetting

God, or a redeemed spirit in heaven, of seeking for enjoyment in a forgetfulness of the adorable Redeemer?) must it not be manifest, that the effort must be unsuccessful, so far as really satisfying happiness is concerned? Can *such* happiness be expected to take up its abode in a breast where such appalling ingratitude to God is cherished? Can real enjoyment be compatible with such impious contempt of a Saviour's love? Can we hesitate for a moment to answer—assuredly not? To suppose it possible, were to suppose that God would connive at such daring rebellion, such revolting ingratitude to Himself, and permit those who thus insulted Him, to enjoy real happiness while offering Him such an inexcusable affront. We do not deny that a certain kind and measure of enjoyment may be derived from such amusements, congenializing as they do with the carnal desires of our fallen natures and the earthly affections of our alienated hearts. But we do deny that it is an enjoyment which deserves the name of true happiness.

We contend, that the unhallowed excitement of such scenes is a most miserable substitute for the holy peace which the love of God infuses into a believer's heart, and the holy happiness which the smile of God diffuses round a Christian's social intercourse. We contend, that the enjoyment of the worldling, in his favourite resorts of God-forgetting gaiety, is as much inferior to what the Christian enjoys in his hours of social converse, which the presence of the God he loves hallows and endears, as the glimmering of a sickly taper is inferior in brightness to the splendour of the noon-tide sun. In the one scene, all is superficial, hollow, heartless. In the other, all is sincere, solid, and stamped with the genuine impress of the heart. In the one, all is turbulence, disappointment and vexation—the feverish excitement, or corroding mortifications, of gratified

or wounded pride, of successful or baffled speculation, of triumphant or disappointed vanity. In the other, all is peace, contentment, cheerfulness—the arrogance of pride subdued by the spirit of Christian humility—the selfishness of speculation expanded into the generosity of Christian love; and the meanness of vanity extinguished by that ennobling principle—a grateful solicitude to promote the glory of God. In a word, the atmosphere of the one is essentially that of this cold world, which chills and blights all the generous and tender affections; the atmosphere of the other is essentially that of heaven, which warms and expands all that is noble and benevolent in the renewed heart. Can we then wonder why the happiness of the children of God, in social intercourse, so altogether transcends that of the children of the world?

Why then, Christian reader, why will you ever unnecessarily expose yourself to the infectious atmosphere of worldly society? Are your spiritual graces so thriving that you have no need to fear the blighting influence of that atmosphere? Does your lamp of Christian faith and love burn always so brightly that you can with safety expose the flame to its chilling damp? Besides, how can you consistently go in search of happiness into scenes where you must not speak of Christ; or seek for enjoyment where you can only find it by unfaithfulness to your divine Master? Will you then go into *such* scenes to compromise your character; and instead of seeking to raise the world to the high standard of the Gospel, be content yourself to sink to the low level of the world? Can you hope for happiness in a course so injurious to your own soul—so ungrateful to your Saviour—so insulting to your God? Moreover, reflect how many a weak or wavering professor may be imboldened by *your* example to venture into an atmosphere that must be

fatal to them. And thus, through your inconsistency, "shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died." Oh! remember "when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, *ye sin against Christ.*" I feel this warning to be much needed in our day. There has been a fearful degree of amalgamation of late between the professing church and the world. The barriers of distinction that ought ever to separate them have been broken down. And what has been the result? The spirituality of the Christian character has been deeply injured. The standard of Gospel-duty has been greatly lowered. The inscription of *non-conformity to the world*, that should be blazoned on the Christian's banner, and stand out in such broad and legible impress on his every principle and movement, is dim and indistinct. The badge of Christ's peculiar people is for a season laid aside, and the world's livery worn in its stead. Unlawful concessions are made to the world's requirements. Intimacies are formed with amiable but unconverted children of the world, which often issue in those forbidden marriages* that are so displeasing to God, as being in direct opposition to His express command, and productive of so much misery to the parties, whose union is unhallowed by His approving smile. It is not, indeed, at all sufficiently considered, even by Christians, what an important influence over their character, and consequently their happiness, is exercised by the companionship which they choose. For so far as a Christian may be called on providentially to come in contact with the people of the world from the

* May I here be permitted to refer to a work entitled "Meditations and Addresses," where I have lifted up my warning voice against the utter sinfulness, and certain misery, of such marriages, contrasted with the happiness of one on which the blessing of God may be expected to rest?

ties of relationship,* or in the discharge of duty, he may hope for the protecting presence of his God to shield him from hurt or harm to his soul. I speak, therefore, of voluntarily chosen companionship. Now, here I will not take the case of positively wicked or worthless companions (for I cannot imagine a Christian choosing *such*), though I am well aware that if hell could be opened to our view, and the secrets of that prison-house of lost souls revealed, the testimony of *myriads* of its miserable inhabi-

* When Christians are thus brought in contact with worldly relatives and worldly society, how earnestly should they pray that divine grace may sanctify their intercourse, and enable them to bear a decided testimony in their divine Master's behalf, and thus seek to promote the spiritual welfare of those who, they have reason to fear, are ignorant of the way of salvation, and strangers to Christ! Oh! that they would weigh well the recorded convictions of one of the brightest ornaments of Christianity in our day! "We are hopeful," says Dr. Chalmers, "that by taking the direct way with that relative whom you want to associate with yourself on the path of heaven, and telling him plainly both of sin and of the Saviour—that in his kindness to you, and perhaps in the conversion of his own soul, your fearlessness and your faithfulness would have their reward. We have no doubt, that did every Christian come forth in the bosom of his own household with more bold and explicit testimonies, we should at length have vastly more of Christianity in our land; and that did our love for souls, and our sense of the worth of eternity, so far prevail as to force a way for us through the tremors and the delicacies of this our mysterious nature, we should at times realize within the precincts of home the noblest achievements of the missionary." Nor less worthy of our deepest attention his solemn admonition, "Because of our criminal reserve souls may have perished everlastingly! and just because Christianity is left out by us in conversation, many perhaps there are who have been confirmed in the habit of leaving it out of their concern altogether. Thus by our shrinking timidity a countenance is given to that spirit of worldliness wherewith the earth throughout all its companies is overspread: and just because Christians are not so free and frequent in their avowals as they should, the mischief is propagated more widely, and settled more inveterately than before."

Would that the Spirit of God would bring these solemn considerations with such power to the hearts of all who love the Lord as would constrain them so faithfully and affectionately to plead the cause of the Saviour, and of their own souls, with every unconverted relative, and friend, and acquaintance, that they might be able to appeal with humble confidence to their Divine Master, and say, "Lord! Thou knowest that if these perish everlastingly, I am clear in Thy sight of the blood of their souls!"

tants would trace to such companionship the ruin of their immortal souls ! But I would rather here advert to what I would call *amiable* but *Christless characters*, and I hesitate not to declare, that I consider *them* dangerous just in proportion to their amiability. Because, where there is much to render a character attractive, and nothing to sound a loud alarm in a Christian's ear, such a character's influence may be, yea, *must* be most injurious. Of such a character it may, with truth, be said, inasmuch as he is not *for* Christ, he is *against* Him. Not feeling himself the power of a Saviour's love, or the fervour of zeal for God's glory, he will use all his influence, in mistaken kindness, to check in his companion an ardour which he will regard as excessive, and to chill an affection which he will consider enthusiastic. Thus all his influence will tend to counteract the Holy Spirit's work in the heart of his friend, to hinder his heavenward progress, to damp the ardour of his holy love and zeal, and to dim the brightness of the Saviour's image in his soul.

Contrast with this the influence of Christian companionship, and see, believer, how inestimable your privilege, if you possess a sincere and faithful Christian friend. What will be *his* paramount aim, as far as you are concerned? What the proofs *he* will give you of his affection? What the use *he* will make of his influence? To bring you closer to God, to make you more like Christ, to fan your love and zeal into a warmer flame, to brighten in your soul the reflection of the Saviour's image, to encourage and assist you in running your heavenward race! Yes, all his influence over you will be employed on God's behalf, for the advancement of your everlasting welfare. And it is only the disclosures of the last day will fully reveal how deeply has many a follower of the Lamb been indebted for spiritual benefits and bless-

ings, in every age of the Christian church, to the wise counsel, the holy conversation, the tender but faithful remonstrance, the consistent and encouraging example, and the frequent and fervent prayers of an attached Christian friend! *Such* is the contrast between the influence of worldly society and Christian communion, as also of worldly companionship and Christian friendship. Why then, believer, ever unnecessarily breathe the atmosphere that is tainted with the spirit of worldliness? Why ever voluntarily choose as a companion the character you cannot love as a friend in Christ?

In thus contrasting the atmosphere and influences of worldly and Christian social intercourse, I would wish to guard my statements from the charge of apparent extravagance or real misconception, by observing, that I speak rather of the *tendency* and *constitution* of them both, than of the motives which in all instances influence individuals, or the results that uniformly follow. For, on the one hand, there may be those who have mixed in worldly scenes without being fully conscious of their essentially ungodly character; and, on the other, the intercourse of Christians is not always what, to be consistent with their privileges and obligations, as the peculiar people of God, it ought to be.

Yes, there have been those, I doubt not, who, more especially at a period when the sinfulness of worldly amusements was not so frequently canvassed, or so fully exposed, as in the present day, may have joined in those scenes without a deliberate design to insult God, or a systematic desire to exclude Him, by means of their unhallowed excitements, from their hearts. But still, the unquestionable tendency, and fearfully prevalent result, of those amusements is thus to shut out the blessed God from the memory and heart of those who mix in them. And this must ever so constitute their essential characteristic and criminality.

as to render them utterly unfit for the children of God, who should shrink with horror from the thought of going to any place, and partaking of any pleasure, in which the remembrance of His presence could not be comfortably cherished, and on which His blessing could not be consistently implored; or of even wishing for a moment to be happy in any scene or society, independently of Him, who is the Source and Giver of all their happiness, and to whom they owe a debt of infinite obligation, which an eternity of gratitude never could repay.

I might have animadverted on other objectionable features of such society and amusements—the sinful expenditure of time and money, talents specifically intrusted for the advancement of God's glory—the late hours, so injurious to health—the violation of female propriety in dress—the homage of admiration paid to rank, beauty, external accomplishments, and those showy qualities, which are of no value in God's estimation; and the depreciation of that “ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,” and those retiring graces of the Christian character, which, “in the sight of God, are of great price:” thus leading the mind to a judgment in this matter opposed to the judgment of God—the ridicule often poured on those who are His peculiar people; and the flattery lavished on those that are the enemies of His cause—the tendency of the gay and dazzling scenes that such society presents, with the altogether worldly, if not more objectionable conversation, that pervades them, to unfit the mind for serious reflection, scriptural study, or devotional communion with God; and to induce an intoxication of feeling, and spirit of levity, utterly incompatible with that sobriety and watchfulness, which well become those who are standing on the brink of eternity, and know not the moment they may see God face to face. All these might have been adduced, as proofs of the unscriptural

character of such society and such amusements; but I have preferred to lay the stress on what constitutes their essential sinfulness in the sight of God, even their tendency to shut Him out, when in search of happiness, from the memory and the heart.

On the other hand, in speaking of Christian social intercourse, it must, I fear, be conceded, that it does not uniformly exhibit that attractiveness of aspect, and produce that sweet and elevated enjoyment, which undeniably it ought to do; and would, if Christians acted more consistently with the spirit and obligations of the high and holy vocation wherewith they are called, and with the example and precepts of the gracious and loving Master, in whose steps they are to tread! Were *His* example faithfully followed, were *His* precepts cordially obeyed, and *His* Spirit fully imbibed and exhibited by *His* people, in their social intercourse, then would the happiness it yields be meet to image, as it will anticipate, the happiness of the social intercourse of saints in heaven, where the very atmosphere is one of pure, unmixed, holy, everlasting love! And this brings me to the second point, in which Christian intercourse has the advantage of worldly, in respect of the measure of enjoyment it imparts—and that is, that Christians have a higher object in view, and more profitable and pleasurable topics of conversation, to exalt and endear their hours of social fellowship. They do not meet for the mere purpose of getting over so much time, in a less wearisome manner than in the dreariness of solitude, or the retirement of home; or even for the purpose of merely amusing themselves and their friends by entertaining discourse on topics, the discussion of which, even when most intellectual and interesting, is not fitted or even designed to promote each other's spiritual and eternal welfare. No! the Christian has learned, that with his tongue, as with every other member, he is to glorify his God—and

consecrate speech, as every other talent, to His cause! "In the salvation of the cross, the Gospel has supplied him with a theme, of which his heart is supposed to be full; and he cannot but speak the things which he has heard and seen." Every man he meets is interested in it as deeply as himself. Unless he speak, they may die in ignorance of it: and he is held conditionally responsible for every word he might have uttered, but omitted; and for every soul that perishes through that neglect. "He believes, and therefore speaks." As if his lips had been touched with sacred fire, or sprinkled with consecrating blood, he is to stand in the midst of his circle, as the oracle of the Cross. His words are no longer his own. As if his were the tongue of Christ Himself, or the only tongue on earth that could testify of the wonders of the Cross, he is to regard himself as set apart to bear witness of Christ. And as it is his office, so it is to be his holy ambition, so to announce and make Him known, that at the close of life, and even of each day of life, he may be able to say, as Christ Himself appealed to the Father, and said—though in an inferior sense—"I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it."

Christians, animated by such considerations, feel that they have a nobler aim, in meeting together for social converse, than merely to entertain and be entertained. Their desire is, to minister to each other's everlasting happiness, by stirring up each other, through the medium of affectionate Christian converse, on the subjects nearest and dearest to their hearts, to warmer love to Him, who is the common centre and bond of union, in whom all their hearts meet and are united in one—to more energetic efforts for the advancement of His cause—to more strenuous exertions for the attainment of conformity to His character—and thus to help each other on their heavenward journey!

How often is the effort, in the resorts of worldly society, to maintain even the form, not to speak of the spirit of conversation, overpoweringly wearisome! What utterly insignificant topics, in which neither the intellect nor the heart can take the smallest interest, are dragged forward, just to get over the time! How do the assembled guests discuss, with reiterated and most tiresome detail, every variation of the weather, and again and again—

“As if a close committee on the sky,
Report it hot, or cold, or wet, or dry.”

How much is said in such society that is so altogether unworthy of being dignified with the name of conversation, as to remind us of the distinction, so justly made by Cowper, in his inimitable poem on this subject—

“Words learned by rote a parrot may rehearse,
But talking is not always to converse.”

And where the conversation is of a more animated character, alas! how often is that animation of an unkind, if not unhallowed stamp! How often does it spring from the ill-natured story, the indelicate innuendo, the satirical remark, the ironical retort! —And even where more polished manners and kindlier feelings prevail, and minds of a more intellectual cast and cultivated refinement converse together, and genius and taste preside, and even a glow of social warmth pervades the assembled group, even in this most favourable specimen of worldly society, what an inferiority below the Christian’s social intercourse, both in respect of dignity of object, and extent of enjoyment, is stamped upon it by the one consideration, that the sole purpose of the party is to entertain and be entertained—that the tone of the conversation is altogether of the

earth, earthy—and will not allow any impress of a heavenly stamp. Yes, “Attend to the lips that can be eloquent and voluble on every subject, *but one*; that can descant on the market and its prices, on the world, and its fashions, and its politics; nay, on every little impulse of the feelings, and every fine-spun sentiment of the mind. But if the great God intrudes into conversation—His ways, or His dispensations, His mercies, and His loving-kindnesses, the tide begins to ebb, the glow of society dies away, and the cold and heartless silence betrays that an *unwelcome stranger* has made his appearance.”

How eloquently does this passage describe the chilling influence of an attempt to introduce religious conversation into a social circle of the children of the world ! Thus the grandest themes that can engage the human mind, and the most delightful topics that can gladden the human heart, are banished from the circle. And thus are they deprived of all the happiness, which the desire to be made a blessing to each other, in reference to their everlasting welfare, and to glorify a beloved Saviour, imparts to the Christian’s enjoyment of social converse with his fellow-Christians, while travelling together to the Canaan of eternal rest.

And what an elevation does this throw round Christian intercourse ! What a spring of pure and exalted pleasure does it become, when the object, for which these fellow-pilgrims to Zion meet together, is to fan in each other’s breasts the holy flame of grateful love to the God of their salvation—and to quicken each other’s zeal and ardour in running their heavenward race, and promoting their beloved Saviour’s glory ! How does this invest their converse with a high and holy character—and make their hearts burn within them with holy love, and hope, and joy ! What sweet themes engage their lips, pouring gladness and comfort into their inmost

souls!—The love of God, that is from everlasting to everlasting, and has embraced them all in its comprehensive grasp;—the character and history of Him, who is to each the “Chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One;” the Redeemer in whom they “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;”—the consolations of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter;—the page of prophecy, unfolding to the eye of faith the promised glories of the church in the millennial age, and the riches of the glory of the inheritance in heaven—“incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” And then, from these general topics of common and endearing interest to them all, if they come to the individual history of a covenant-God’s loving-kindness, as manifested to each, what miracles of divine mercy has each to record, for the confirmation and comfort of all the rest! What communications of strengthening and refreshing grace! What revelations of faithful unconquerable love! What temptations baffled—what perils escaped—what triumphs achieved—what pure thankful happiness thrills through each breast, while these fellow-disciples of the same loving Lord, in sweet communion, with hearts glowing with love to Him and to each other, discuss these themes—

“Exciting oft their gratitude and love,
While they retrace, with memory’s pointing wand,
That calls the past to their exact review,
The dangers they escaped, the broken snare,
The disappointed foe, deliverance found
Unlooked for, life preserved, and peace restored,
Fruits of omnipotent, eternal love!”

Why, why is it, that with *such* themes to supply them with an unfailing source of exquisite enjoyment, attracting their hearts close to God and to each other, and anticipating the happiness of heaven, Christians, when they meet together, ever in-

dulge in unprofitable—or still worse—in uncharitable conversation? Why turn away from such topics to indulge in what may be called religious gossiping—prattling about the spiritual concerns of others with a heartlessness and a flippancy, that must be particularly offensive to God—to comment with uncharitable censoriousness on the inconsistencies of fellow-Christians, or the sins of those who are strangers to the Lord—to criticise preachers and preaching in a spirit of cavilling fastidiousness, forgetting that the minister is an ambassador of Christ, and that he delivers, in his Divine Master's name a message, for whose reception they must individually give an account to Him, in the day of judgment—to cast a stone of reproach at their fellow-sinners, without ever thinking how utterly destitute they are of the required qualification for the task (John viii. 7)—to engage in fierce polemical disputation about doubtful and non-essential points, contending for personal triumph, not mutual edification—to speak with irreverent familiarity of names and subjects which should impress even on the very countenance the stamp of solemnity—and to plunge, with unhallowed presumption, into mysteries which the wisest and holiest of God's servants have always approached with the profoundest awe?

Let me not be misunderstood. I do not mean that the Christian, when he is forbidden to judge, is thereby forbidden to discriminate between moral good and evil; or when he is prohibited from condemning, is thereby prohibited from censuring what is wrong, as well as commanding what is right. He especially is warned not to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, darkness for light, and light for darkness; and called upon to protest against whatever is opposed to the will and glory of his God. But I mean that he should condemn sin, and yet

compassionate the sinner—and, instead of speaking unkindly *of* him in his absence, (which cannot possibly do him, or the speaker, or the listeners, any good,) go and expostulate *with* him, faithfully, face to face; which may, with God's blessing, be the means of saving his soul. Nor do I mean that doubtful points should not be discussed, nor sacred names and subjects spoken of, or deep mysteries investigated—but that such points should be canvassed in a candid and amicable spirit; and such names pronounced with suitable solemnity; and such mysteries approached with becoming humility and awe. And above all, I mean that Christians should not indulge in religious gossiping, or cavilling criticism, with an utter absence of seriousness or humility, and call *this* religious conversation. I mean that they should not usurp the authority of the Judge, and pass sentence on their fellow-sinners, and then think they are discharging a duty acceptable to Him who has said, “Why judgest thou another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Judge not that ye be not judged. Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned.” I mean that they should not comment, in an uncharitable or unkind spirit, on the faults and failings of their fellow-Christians, their brethren and sisters in Christ; and then fancy that such conversation is a proof of their discipleship, well-pleasing to Him who has said, “By *this* shall all men know that ye are *My* disciples, if ye have *love* one to another.” The more, indeed, I have heard or observed of what passes in what is called the religious world, the more I am convinced of this—that the field of religious gossiping is altogether barren of spiritual fruit—(this is emphatically “the talk of the lips that tendeth to penury”)—that the field of angry controversy is indeed fruitful, but it is *only* with thistles and thorns—that the field of uncharitable censoriousness produces a luxuriant crop

of the rank weeds of spiritual pride; for it is certain that they who think most of their own faults, will always speak least of the faults of others (the converse is equally true;) and Christian charity is as sure an index and concomitant of Christian humility, as censorious uncharitableness is of proud self-righteousness—and that it is only the field of scriptural truth, encompassed with an atmosphere of Christian love, which exhibits the fragrance and fertility of a field “that the Lord hath blessed.” The atmosphere is clear and calm—unsullied by mists, and undisturbed by storms. On this field the beams of the Sun of Righteousness shine brightly, flinging a celestial splendour over every scene. The dews of the Holy Spirit descend softly and refreshingly on the beauteous flowers, and precious fruits, that flourish in this garden of the Lord. And not an air is wasted from it but breathes of the love of God, and is redolent of the purity, and peace, and blessedness of heaven. When you meet with fellow-travellers to Zion, dear Christian friends, walk with them through the length and breadth of *this* field—inhale its balmy atmosphere—bask in its glorious sunshine—gather its lovely flowers—feed on its precious fruits! Then indeed will your souls be strengthened, refreshed, purified, gladdened, in the Lord. Fear not that it will be too confined for your range. Why, it will be boundless enough to expatriate in through eternity! While walking together there, you shall meet with angels, yea, with the Lord of angels, who will visit you there, and fill your hearts with unutterable joy, as He opens to you the Scriptures concerning Himself, and unfolds bright prospects of the glory He will give you in the day of His appearing, and throughout the ages of a blissful eternity!

If Christians were but thus faithful to their Divine Master, and were always solicitous to make their

converse together thus instrumental in glorifying Him, and profiting each other and themselves, by selecting such topics and discussing them in such a spirit, as He would approve and bless, what a fountain of spiritual strength and refreshment would Christian communion prove! What a source of mutual comfort and edification! How would they help to lighten each other's burden, and revive each other's spirits, when fainting under the pressure of the conflict with indwelling sin, and accumulated sorrow! While speaking together of His love, and of the heaven where they are all soon to meet, and spend an eternity of happiness in His presence, how would they forget all the toils and trials of their earthly pilgrimage, as the thought of the love that has chastened them in its faithfulness,, and the heaven, for whose bliss these. very afflictions are graciously intended to make them meet, came sweetly over their spirits, and soothed and cheered them with bright anticipations "of the glory to be revealed," and sweet foretastes of the bliss to be enjoyed, when "He shall come to be glorified in His saints," and they shall all be made partakers together of his everlasting blessedness and glory. O ! "that they who fear the Lord would thus speak often one to another! Then would the Lord hearken and hear it, and record it in the book of remembrance, that is written before Him, for them that fear the Lord and that think upon His name." Were such uniformly the character of Christian intercourse, such the topics chosen, and such the tone and temper in which they were discussed, then indeed would it appear how abundantly, by its elevating, hallowing, and sweetening influence on social communion, the Gospel is entitled, as the patroness of true happiness, to the gratitude and affectionate homage of mankind.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DOMESTIC AFFECTIONS.

THE last point, in reference to which I propose considering our subject, and establishing the claims of Christianity to be regarded as the patroness of true happiness, is connected with our affections—with all those endearing relationships of life, on which so large a measure of our earthly happiness manifestly depends. And here the superiority of the children of God over the children of the world is too evident to be denied, and almost too obvious to require being enforced. Nor is it one of the meanest triumphs of the gospel, that it infuses so much additional sweetness into one of the purest sources of earthly enjoyment; for it requires no profound knowledge of the constitution of our nature, or of the elements of which earthly happiness chiefly consists, to be aware that the various affections, which a gracious God has linked around the human heart, and which render home a name so dear, are the sweetest fountains of earthly felicity, which, in His infinite tenderness, He has opened for us in the wilderness, to cheer and refresh us on our journey to the Canaan above!

Now, the immense advantage which the Christian possesses over the worldling, in regard to the affections, when viewed as a source of happiness, will at once appear from this consideration—that while the Christian can enjoy whatever is sweet in these affections, and the endearing companionship and interchange of feeling resulting from them, equally with the worldling, this sweetness is to him unalloyed (as we have already shown,) by those apprehensions and anxieties which imbitter its enjoyment to the idolater of earthly love; and increased by the admixture of some delightful associations and hopes, to which those

whose affections are unhallowed by a Saviour's smile, are necessarily strangers. What is there, let me ask, calculated to impart pure and intense pleasure to the human heart, in the love that links husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters together, which the child of God is in the smallest degree excluded from experiencing as fully as the votary of the world? Will not the conjugal, the parental, the filial, or fraternal tie twine itself as closely and as endearingly around a Christian's as around a worldling's heart?

Yea, from the tendency of the gospel to cherish every benevolent emotion, and to mould the character into a conformity with His whose name is love, all these endearing affections will thrive most luxuriantly in the congenial soil of a Christian's heart, and there put forth their sweetest fragrance, and their brightest bloom. Love is the very element of the Christian's character—the very essence of that new nature which the Holy Spirit has imparted to him. Identified, by a oneness of spirit, with that loving Saviour whose visit to our world, and every step of His journey through it, was marked with the impress of divine love, the Christian feels his heart disposed to embrace with cordial affection every member of the great family of man. With what peculiar, with what intensified affection then must it be disposed to embrace every member of that endeared circle, which is twined, as it were, around his very heart-strings, by all the fond recollections and touching associations of home! With what deep tenderness will he who has learned to love even his enemies, love his father and mother, brother or sister, wife or child! How will his heart, accustomed to luxuriate in the indulgence of every affectionate emotion, delight itself in the love with which it will cling around and cherish those objects which have been associated with its tenderest, fondest remembrances from life's earliest

years! And this delight will be unchecked and unchilled by any of those selfish or malevolent feelings, which so often damp the warmth and interrupt the harmony of domestic affection among the children of the world. How often does cold indifference blight the love that once glowed so warmly in hearts whose affection is unconsecrated by a Saviour's smile! How often do jealous feelings or jarring interests snap asunder the strongest links in the chain of brotherly or sisterly affection, when no bond of brotherhood in Christ cements the union by that love which alone can stamp on affection the impress of immortality!

But there are one or two circumstances which deserve to be more distinctly considered, in proving how much the Christian has the advantage over the worldling, in regard to the happiness that flows through the channel of the affections. The first I would advert to has been already touched upon in the opening of this work, where we showed that the idolater in earthly love, even when most successful in the pursuit of the object on which he has concentrated all his desires and hopes of earthly happiness, must still pay the penalty of his impiety and ingratitude to God, for robbing Him of His rightful prerogative, even the chief place in His affections, by innumerable anxieties and apprehensions, which are the inseparable concomitants of idolatrous creature-love; and by that aching sense of sickening disappointment and dissatisfaction, which must ever be felt in the human heart, till He who formed it, and who alone can fill it, takes up His abode there, and reigns, in undisputed sovereignty, over all its affections and desires.

The Christian, by keeping all these earthly affections subordinated to the love of God his Saviour, while they are sanctified and sweetened by His smile, is enabled to derive from them the purest enjoyment, unimbittered by those corroding anxieties which

poison the pleasures of all idolatrous attachment; and hallowed by the blessing of that God who has implanted these affections in the heart, and who, when He Himself reigns there supreme, will infuse into them indescribable sweetness, from the remembrance that they are the gifts of His love. Yes, when the heart loves earthly objects in and for God, with a subordinate and sanctified affection, then indeed is earthly love a fountain of the purest, sweetest bliss. Forget or despise that solemn warning (Matt. x. 37) —make earthly objects idols—give them God's place in your heart—and the frown of a jealous God will descend on these usurpers of His prerogative, and blight all the enjoyments which their love can supply. Keep earthly objects in their proper place in your heart. That is, let God's just demand, "Give *Me* thine heart," be fully answered—and let all the objects of earthly affection be loved in strict subordination to Him, and with a grateful sense of His goodness in bestowing them; and then His blessing will rest upon them, and brighten them into covenant-mercies, and hallowed fountains of the most unalloyed and overflowing happiness.

Besides, as we before observed, the earthly idolater is perpetually haunted by the fear of losing for ever the objects around which all his hopes of earthly happiness are entwined. And this fear often casts a deep and chilling gloom over his spirit, in its sunniest hours of enjoyment. He is like the merchant whose whole capital is embarked in one grand speculation, which, if it fail, will leave him in utter bankruptcy and ruin. Whereas, the Christian remembers that death will immediately introduce him into the presence of *the Object* in heaven whom he loves with supreme affection; and can only separate him, *for a season*, from those beloved ones on earth, whom he loves with a holy love, for that Saviour's sake. His *supreme* happiness being safely secured in Christ's

own keeping, he feels the fullest confidence that he cannot be deprived of *this* by any possible contingency that can befall even the most fondly-loved of earthly objects; and this feeling enables him to enjoy, with undisturbed serenity, the *subordinate* happiness which these affections, when thus hallowed, were designed by a bountiful Creator to supply; and thus the Christian, in regard to the happiness connected with his earthly affections, resembles a merchant who knows that his capital is securely invested, and perfectly safe—and can therefore contemplate, with calm composure, the possible failure of some speculation, in which a *comparatively* small portion of his principal is embarked, because he knows that its loss cannot leave him a bankrupt in happiness! For how can *he* ever be so, who is privileged, as having invested his heart's supreme affections and happiness in the hands of God Himself, to draw at all times, to an unlimited extent, on the infinite resources of the Deity, for satisfying enjoyment!

But there is another consideration which stamps on the love of the children of God for each other, in all the endearing relationships of life, a peculiarly delightful character, and enables it to administer most abundantly to their happiness—I mean that their earthly love is exalted and hallowed by such a resemblance to Christ's love, as gives it a celestial cast—and prompts the most affectionate endeavours to minister to the spiritual welfare, the everlasting happiness, of the beloved objects on whom it is bestowed.

Let those who do not supremely love the Saviour love each other, in any of the tender relationships of life, as fondly as they may, their solicitude to administer to the happiness of those they love can never rise above an earthly level—can never aspire to any purer or nobler enjoyments than earthly sources will supply. They cannot sympathize with each other in the sacred pleasures of united prayer and praise to

the same beloved and adored Object of their heart's supremest love. They cannot taste the hallowed delight of studying together the word of God, and rejoicing together, while engaged in the delightful task, in all its exceeding great and precious promises. They cannot understand the ineffable joy of endeavouring to fan the flame of grateful love to the Saviour in a beloved object's heart—to quicken his zeal in that Saviour's service—to uphold and stimulate him in running his heavenward race—to advance his conformity to his Divine Master's image—and thus, at once, to bring down more of heaven's love and heaven's joy into his heart, while here below; and to make him more meet, by increased holiness, for the enjoyment of heaven's happiness, when admitted into the immediate presence of his God, in the realms of everlasting light and love.

From all these sources of exquisite enjoyment, the children of the world, however fondly attached to each other as parents and children, as husbands and wives, as brothers and sisters, are altogether shut out. No Saviour's smile beams upon, and brightens *their* love! No *holy* sympathy sanctifies and sweetens *their* joys and sorrows! No hallowed altar, fragrant with the incense of morning and evening adoration to a covenant-God, consecrates *their* home! No hope of celestial glory and everlasting re-union in a world beyond the grave, sheds its cheering radiance through the gloom of *their* chamber of sickness, or bed of death!

Worldly parents, however attached to their children, or solicitous for their advancement, are still excluded from the elevating hopes and prospects which Christian love imparts. They cannot sympathize with the exalted feelings which filled the bosom of a Christian father, when, on being asked, as he had neglected to instruct his children in some of those fashionable accomplishments which he considered

inconsistent with the unostentatious simplicity and spirituality of the Christian character—"Had he no desire that his children should shine?" he replied, with a countenance beaming with the reflection of the glorious scenes that faith was unfolding to his view—"I *have* a great desire that my children should shine; but *it is* 'as the stars, for ever and ever!'" How strikingly is the utter earthliness of the affection for their children, cherished by the fondest parents, in whose hearts a Saviour's love has not been shed abroad, exposed by Dr. Chalmers, when commenting, in the third volume of his invaluable lectures on the Romans, on the apostle's memorable wish, (Rom. ix. 3,) "That the same parent, who is so intent on the preferment of his children in the world, should be so utterly listless of their prospects, nor put forth one endeavour to obtain for them preferment in heaven—that he who would mourn over it as the sorest of his family trials, should one of them be bereft of any of the corporeal senses; and yet should take it so easily, although none of them have a right sense of God, or a right principle of godliness—that he who would be so sorely astounded did any of his little ones perish in a conflagration or a storm, should be so unmoved by all the fearful things that are reported of the region on the other side of death, where the fury of an incensed Lawgiver is poured upon all who have not fled to Christ, as their refuge from the tempest, and they are made to lie down in the devouring fire, and to dwell with everlasting burnings—that to avert from the objects of our tenderness the calamities, or to obtain for them the good things, of this present life, there should be so much of care and of busy expedient, while not one practical measure is taken either to avert from them that calamity which is the most dreadful, or to secure for them that felicity which is the most glorious—why there is indeed such obvious demonstration in all this of time being

regarded as our all, and eternity being counted by us as nothing—so light an esteem in it of that God, an inheritance in whom we treat as of far less value for those who are dear to us than that they should be made richly to inherit the gifts of His providence—such a preference for ourselves, and for the fleeting generations that come after us, of the short-lived creature to the Creator, who endureth for ever—as most strikingly to mark, even by the very loves and amiable sensibilities of our hearts, how profoundly mersed we are in the grossest carnality—that after all it is but an earthly horizon that bounds us, and an earthly platform we grovel on—that Nature, even in her best and most graceful exhibitions, gives manifest token of her fall, proving herself an exile from Paradise even in the kindest and honestest of the sympathies which belong to her—that retaining, though she does, many soft and tender affinities for those of her own kind, she has been cast down and degraded beneath the high aims and desires of immortality—accursed even in her moods of greatest generosity, and evil in the very act of giving good gifts unto her children!” How nobly does he hold up the Christian standard, in describing the duty of parents on behalf of their beloved children, when he exhorts them—“To look onward for their children to a place in heaven—to enter them accordingly into a process of spiritual education—to watch, and examine, and labour, until the spiritual principles be established, and the spiritual character be formed in them—to besiege in prayer the upper sanctuary, that they may obtain the patronage of the great Intercessor who is there in behalf of their family, and through Him the grace and liberality of the King upon the throne!”

How solemn his expostulation, when he asks them, “If you love your children, and at the same time are listless about their eternity, what other explanation can be given than that you believe not what the Bible

tells of eternity? You believe not of the wrath, and the anguish, and the tribulation that are there. Those piercing cries that here from any one of your children would go to your very heart, and drive you frantic with the horror of its sufferings, you do not believe that there is pain there to call them forth. You do not think of the meeting-place that you are to have with them before the judgment-seat of Christ, and of the looks of anguish and the words of reproach that they will cast upon you, for having neglected and so undone their eternity. The awful sentence of condemnation—the signal of everlasting departure to all who know not God, and obey not the gospel—the ceaseless moanings that ever and anon shall ascend from the lake of living agony—the grim and dreary imprisonment, whose barriers are closed, insuperably and for ever, on the hopeless outcasts of vengeance—these, ye men who wear the form of godliness, but show not the power of it in your training of your families—these are not the articles of your faith! To you they are as the imaginations of a legendary fable. Else why this apathy? Why so alert to the rescue of your young from even the most trifling of calamities, and this dead indifference about their exposure to the most tremendous of all?"

What a fearful eternity (are we thus reminded,) will be spent together by parents who have neglected the everlasting welfare of their children, and children who have perished everlasting by that neglect! The children reproaching their parents as the chief causes of their ruin, and cursing them as the authors of an existence which they did all in their power to make miserable for ever! And the anguish of the parents from their own everlasting ruin in that place of torment, tremendously aggravated by witnessing the wretchedness and listening to the wailings of the children whom, if not by encouragement in sin, at least by neglecting to lead them in the way of

salvation, they were themselves chiefly instrumental in ruining for eternity!

Having thus exposed, in the powerful language of this master in Israel, the low ambition, the appalling cruelty, (as concerns the best interests, the everlasting welfare of those it loves,) exhibited by mere earthly affection, unhallowed by a Saviour's love, in even the fondest parent's heart, and shown, how little such affection provides for the true happiness of its objects, let us now reverse the picture.

Let us contrast with the melancholy scene we have described, the Christian's high and holy aims and aspirations, his exalted privileges and pleasures, in his happy, *because* his hallowed home.

Just picture to yourself a Christian home, where all the members are united, not merely in the endearing ties of earthly affection, but the yet sweeter bonds of Christian love!

Picture the father as the priest of the family-circle, morning and evening assembling the dear domestic group around the family-altar, to offer up their united supplications and thanksgivings to the common God and Father of them all; and to seek for guidance, wisdom, and strength, for the duties of the day, by searching the oracles of God! Imagine the attached group listening with devout reverence to the voice of God speaking to them in His word; and blending their hearts and voices together in those songs of praise which should always (so much do they impart a spirit of holy gladness to the service,) accompany, when practicable, the celebration of family-worship in a Christian home! Then picture the various members, after the temperate and thankful meal, seasoned and sanctified by affectionate, cheerful, and profitable converse, again assembled to consult the lively oracles, and store up lessons of divine wisdom, and supplies of spiritual strength, while studying together that blessed book! Then separating to their several

avocations—all animated by one spirit, all pursuing one object—to glorify the God of their salvation, by the consecration of their talents and time to His service, in whatever different spheres of labour they may be individually engaged. Again, after the labours of the day, they assemble, with affectionate greeting, for the family meal, where piety, cheerfulness, and love preside. Then come such evenings as a Christian family can alone enjoy—such as Cowper has so felicitously described—where Christian affection, hallowing all the innocent cheerfulness of the domestic circle, endears, and Christian conversation, ranging over the wide and glorious field that a Saviour's love opens to the view, enlivens the hours spent in pursuits and pleasures, that—

“Leave no stain upon the wings of time.”

Once more, ere they separate for the night, the sacred volume speaks peace and comfort to their souls; and their hearts and voices are again mingled in the sweet sacrifice of prayer and praise, that rises up from this family of love before the throne of God. And then, after the affectionate parting benediction, with the sweet assurance, that if not again on earth, they shall all meet in heaven, they retire—to rest in peace under the shadow of a Saviour's wing, safe under His protection, and happy in His smile. Such is the picture of a day, spent in a Christian home!

How sweetly is it diversified by the hallowed occupations and enjoyments of the Sabbath! What must be the feelings of *such* a family, when they are all assembled together in the sanctuary, or at the sacramental table—and, while there engaged, as with one heart and voice, in the songs and services of the earthly temple—or enjoying in sweet communion the feast that commemorates a Saviour's dying love, they anticipate the unspeakable blessedness of worshipping together, through everlasting ages, in their

Father's house of praise above—and sitting down together at the marriage-supper of the Lamb! How delightful also the employments, suitable to that day of holy rest, and yet holy occupation—instructioning the younger members of the family, and the domestics, in the precious truths of God's blessed word—or feeding the lambs of the flock, gathered every Sabbath in the Sunday school! How swiftly and sweetly does a Sabbath pass, filled up with such employments blended with secret and family prayer, scriptural study, religious reading, hallowed converse and devotional meditation on the ever new, ever precious theme of a Saviour's love!

Such, I say, is the picture of a day spent by a family, all whose members are united in Christ. And such as that day is the picture of their life! Who can glance at *this* picture, and not feel, that if happiness is to be found on earth, it is in the bosom of such a home as this?

Let it not be said, that I have drawn a picture from the imagination, which has no counterpart in real life. I trust the experience of many a Christian family can testify to its truth. Can we read the life of the holy, heavenly-minded Venn, without being convinced, that it was realized, in all its loveliest features, beneath his hallowed roof?

Nor let it be supposed, that I have forgotten, that the scene of this sketch is on earth—in a wilderness—a world of sin and sorrow—of partings and of death! No! I do not forget, that as they grow up, the younger branches must be separated from the home of their childhood; and leave a painful blank behind, as one link after another is severed from the society of the parental roof. Nor do I forget, that the members of this happy family are still encompassed with a body of infirmity, and but imperfectly renewed in the image of God! No! I have not forgotten all this! I know the picture must have its

shades. The members must separate—but each will go to be a channel of blessings in a new sphere—and many a happy meeting again on earth will be a type and foretaste of their eternal re-union in heaven.

Sorrow will intrude on this happy scene. But then will the Saviour's precious promise to His people be fulfilled—"In the world you shall have tribulation—but in Me you shall have peace!" and sorrow will only enhance the preciousness of that promise, and the sweetness of that peace! The bow of covenant love will shine brighter amid the surrounding gloom! Grateful for the retrospect of past mercies, and cheered by the prospect of coming glory, they will be enabled, amidst all their trials, to "*thank God, and take courage,*"—assured that their God is guiding them "*by the right way to the city of habitation!*" But a worse intruder will enter that paradise—for sin cannot be entirely shut out. The tranquillity of the peaceful scene will sometimes be ruffled by an angry breath—but the voice of a Saviour's love will soon still the rising storm, and restore all again to harmony and peace! Unchristian tempers will sometimes be displayed, and darken the sunshine of domestic happiness with a passing cloud. But it will be a *passing* one, for it will soon be dispelled by a Saviour's smile.

Sickness will enter this abode of happy hearts. But it will come with a crowd of compensating comforts in its train. It will develop more fully, and call into livelier exercise, every Christian grace. It will link the members of the family circle more closely in the bonds of Christian love. And many will be the precious lessons of a Saviour's faithfulness and tenderness that they will learn in the chamber of sickness, where He will come by His presence to support the sufferer, and to soothe the mourners, that watch and minister beside the bed of pain.

And death will visit this habitation of the servants of God! But oh! how the aspect of this king of terrors is changed, when he crosses the threshold of such a home!—When he comes as a messenger of mercy, to announce to one of its much loved inmates, “Thy warfare is accomplished—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!” And the bereaved survivors, amidst the tears which He who wept beside the grave of Lazarus will not condemn, but gently wipe away, shall hear a voice that whispers—“Sorrow not, as others without hope, for the loved one, that has fallen asleep in Jesus; for those that sleep in Him, will God bring with Him in the day of His glorious appearing, and then you shall be all reunited, to be thenceforth together, for ever, with the Lord.” How will they be enabled, with *such* a prospect, to cry out, even amidst the severing of earth’s dearest ties—“Oh! death, where is thy sting? Oh! grave, where is thy victory?” When they reflect, that when death has summoned each to their rest with Jesus, and the pilgrimage of life to all is past, re-assembled in their Father’s house of many mansions above, in that world where the cruel severer of earthly ties can never come, they shall form, throughout eternity, a *happy family in heaven*.

If these things be so, surely I have redeemed my pledge on this point also; and have proved, that the Gospel is promotive of true happiness, as far as our affections are concerned, by purifying them from those passions that pollute and poison their source—by securing them from that idolatry which turns their blessings into a curse,—by freeing them from those apprehensions which imbibiter their enjoyment —by giving a high and holy character to the love they inspire, and the happiness they impart—and soothing the sorrows of that separation for a season on earth, which death must inflict, by the prospect which faith unfolds, of a blissful re-union, for eternity in heaven.

How careful then should every child of God be, in entering on the marriage state, to form such a union as can be conducive to such blessed results; and to regard a marriage with one who does not love the Lord as a "forbidden marriage," on which a Christian can neither hope nor ask for the blessing of God! And how anxious should all the members of every Christian family be, to realize the full beauty and blessedness of a home like this!

How should the heads of the family be instant in prayer, *with* each other, and *for* each other; and in searching the Scriptures, alone and together, that they may be furnished by the Holy Spirit with such wisdom and grace, as will enable them to discharge the awful responsibility resting on them with faithfulness; and to exercise the solemn office intrusted to them, in such a manner as will most effectually advance the glory of God, and the *best* because the *eternal* interests of the little world of immortals committed to their charge. How should they treasure up, as it were, in their very heart of hearts the awful and affecting consideration, that "the parent possesses an influence over his offspring more powerful than the mightiest monarch ever swayed over his subjects. His voice is the first music they hear—his smiles, their bliss—his authority, the image and substitute of the divine authority. So absolute is the law which impels them to believe his every word, to imitate his every tone, gesture, and action, and to receive the inefaceable impressions of his character, that his every movement drops a seed into the virgin soil of their hearts, to germinate there for eternity. His influence, by blending itself with their earliest conceptions, and incorporating with the very elements of their constitution, and by the constancy, subtilty, variety, and power of its operation, gives him a command over their character and destiny, which renders

it the most appropriate emblem on earth of the influence of God Himself."

How should Christian parents therefore labour, with unwearied energy and prayerful perseverance, for the salvation of *all* their children—that, if the sorest of all trials to a Christian parent's heart—the shadow which clouds the sunshine of a Christian home with the darkest gloom—should be appointed for them, even the seeing any of those who are dear to them as their own souls, not sheltered in the fold of Christ, and therefore not safe for eternity, they may at least be comforted by the reflection, that they have done all in their power to avert from their beloved ones the tremendous doom of a lost eternity. Then may they indulge the cheering and consolatory hope, while thus faithfully using every means within their reach, that yet the object of their ceaseless solicitudes and supplications shall be accomplished; and there shall happen under their roof an event which shall impart a thrill of holy joy to the angels of God, and shall cause the high arches of heaven to ring with jubilee—when a son or a daughter, turned unto righteousness, becomes the reward of a parent's faithfulness, the fruit of a parent's prayers. Oh! what a blessed hope was suggested to the mourning mother of St. Augustin—"Woman, the child of so many prayers and tears could not be lost." Animated with this hope, how should Christian parents exercise the all-important influence intrusted to them by the great Father of the human family, for the advancement of the everlasting happiness of their beloved children, to the utmost extent of their ability, by conducting the family worship with solemnity, fervour, affectionateness, and wise adaptation to the peculiar wants and circumstances of the domestic circle—assisting the younger branches in the study of the word of God—upholding that word in its paramount authority, as the arbiter from whose decisions

there is to be no appeal; and never sanctioning, from any consideration, any pursuit or pleasure which *it* condemns—exhibiting, in their own example, an attractive pattern of conjugal and parental affection—checking, by the salutary control of a judicious discipline, whatever is morally wrong; and rebuking and restraining, with holy zeal and firmness, whatever is opposed to God's will and word—praying frequently and fervently with and for their beloved children—watching anxiously over the souls of their servants, striving to bring them all to Christ—and giving a high and holy, yet cheerful tone to the conversation of the domestic circle! How should they seek to interest the hearts, and engage the exertions of their children, on behalf of every benevolent undertaking, every Christian institution*—as also to form them to a relish for simple pleasures and solid

* “Heads of families must remember that parental influence and domestic relationships are to be consecrated to the same object. Not only must they train their children to habits of benevolence, early impressing them that the principal value of money consists in its subserviency to the cause of Christ: they must look higher and farther even than this. They must themselves feel that the chief value, even of their children, consists in their consecration to the same glorious cause. And, therefore, they must early begin to train them to take part in it; instructing them in the nature and progress of Christian missions: impressing it on them, that the conversion of the world to Christianity is the noblest enterprise in which they can engage; inspiring them, if consistent with other claims, with zeal to embark in it; and in the event of their so doing, preparing, as far as possible, to support them in it.”—*The Great Commission.* May the Holy Spirit impress this solemn appeal on every Christian parent's heart! Might not the Saviour, indeed, justly expect that such parents, feeling what the Gospel has done for the happiness of their own home, should do all in their power, by labouring as missionaries in their own land, and encouraging and supporting the labours of the missionaries abroad, to diffuse the same happiness through every home in the habitable globe? Does not love to their fellow-man, the consideration what benefactors to mankind their children will thus become, and gratitude to Him who has purchased for them, at *such* a price, all the happiness that dwells in their own heart, and their own home, imperatively demand this at their hands?

pursuits, that the cheerful happiness of home may prevent the desire for the sinful excitement of gaiety abroad. How should they endeavour to impart to their motives the piety and philanthropy, and to their manners the “meekness and gentleness, of Christ”—keeping their secular studies and accomplishments in due subordination and subservience to higher objects and more valuable attainments—investing the study of the Scriptures, and the service of the sanctuary, with an attractive character of holy cheerfulness, and sacred joy—and making the Sabbath at once “honourable to the Lord, and a delight,”* as the happiest day of the week, and the sacramental supper to all the family a holy feast of divine refreshment! How careful should they be to give their children a favourable impression of the Gospel, by the exhibition of the peace and happiness it has imparted to their own souls, and that lovely image it has impressed on their own characters, showing them that they feel it to be equally their duty and their privilege to train them up for God, and educate them for eternity—and that no wealth, no honours, rank for a moment in their estimation, as the object they desire on their behalf, with the “unsearchable riches of Christ, and the crown of glory that fadeth not away”—regulating by the scriptural standard the expenditure of money, and the employment of time—and marking unequivocally, by the domestic arrangements and recreations, the selection of society, and the choice of friends, that the Saviour’s smile is the approbation which, above all things, they are solicitous to secure; the Saviour’s glory, the object,

* How carefully should the Christian heads of families abstain from every approach to Sabbath desecration, whether receiving or reading common-place letters, paying worldly visits, the unnecessary use of vehicles, rail-road travelling, or dinner parties, or any mode of spending time inconsistent with the high and holy purposes for which the Sabbath was appointed—even to prepare the soul for the enjoyment of the sublime services and holy joys of the celestial sanctuary—the Sabbath of the skies!

which, in all things, they are desirous to advance! And how should the children of such a family contribute their share to the promotion of its holiness and happiness, by faithfully keeping the “first commandment with promise,” which calls on them to “honour their father and mother”—reverencing their authority, as the delegated authority of God; and loving them, as next to God, the objects most entitled to their love—gratefully and gladly submitting to their control, and complying with their commands—contentedly resigning their own will to theirs, if ever they are opposed; and cheerfully acquiescing in their arrangements, even if they thwart their own plans—while studying, by all the affectionate ministrations of filial love, to soothe their sorrows, and to increase their joys! And how should they seek, as brothers and sisters, “to be kindly affectioned one to another; in honour preferring one another; loving each other with a pure heart fervently”—fondly sharing each other’s joys and griefs, and tenderly watching over each other’s welfare—carefully abstaining from whatever could irritate or wound; and delighting to administer, by every means within their reach, to the happiness of all around! Thus, by diligent attention to all the claims of personal piety, walking with God, with holy watchfulness, in all His ways; and by the faithful discharge of every filial and fraternal duty, walking in love, as dear children of God, with all the members of their own dear home. Oh! if all families of professing Christians were regulated by such principles, and animated by such a spirit, what a glorious change would soon pass over the aspect of the Christian world! Then would the triumph of the Gospel be indeed complete! Then would the claims of Christianity to a divine original be incontestably established! Then would the great object of the loving Saviour’s mission of mercy to our world be abundantly accomplished, even

“the glory of God in the highest, and on earth peace and good-will towards men!” Then would the dawn of the millennial day of glory break on a regenerated earth—for the reign of righteousness, and love, and peace, would begin! And soon would the world’s wilderness, beneath its blessed influence, “rejoice and blossom as the rose.” And the face of Christendom, when the Christian world was thus composed of a congregated society of holy and happy families, would reflect to the eye of God, looking down on it with delight from His throne on high, the very image of His own attributes and government, radiant with the celestial lustre of the anticipated love, and holiness, and happiness of heaven.

And can we glance even at this brief sketch of the blessed effects of the influence of genuine Christianity, and not wonder that the cause of missions (established for the diffusion of that influence) has not enlisted on its behalf a larger measure of the zeal of Christian love, and the contributions of Christian liberality; and that more fervent prayer and more energetic efforts have not been made for the spread of Christianity by the church of Christ?

Doubtless, this is to be attributed, in a great measure, to the want of deeper and more devoted love to Christ, both in its ministers, for how few of them are willing to embark in the missionary cause? and in its members, for when do we hear of a Christian layman settling, from love to the Saviour (as many will do from the love of money,) in heathen lands, to diffuse the blessings of the Gospel there? It is to be attributed also to the want of a juster appreciation of the value of immortal souls, of a more enlarged and influential spirit of Christian philanthropy, and of a more grateful desire to spend and be spent in the Saviour’s service.

But there is one want, to which, pre-eminently, this deplorable result must be ascribed, the want of

a more abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Were *this* want supplied, oh! what glorious results might be expected to follow! The language of a powerful writer of our day is not too strong—“Could,” he says, “a convocation be held of all the churches upon earth, the object of their one united cry should be for that promised Spirit. Let *that* be secured, and in obtaining that we shall obtain the supply of every other want: we should find that we had acquired the same mind which was also in Christ: a benevolence, which would yearn over the whole human race; a brotherly love, which would combine with the whole body of Christians for the recovery of the world; a zeal, which would be ever devising fresh methods of usefulness, practising self-denial, and laying itself out in the service of Christ; and a perseverance, which would never rest till the whole family of man should be seated together at the banquet of salvation!”

How fervently, then, should Christians in their secret devotions, and social worship, pray for the plentiful outpouring of that Spirit on whose influences such glorious and blessed results essentially depend! And if such supplications were continually besieging the Throne of Grace, who can calculate what would be the effect on the moral and spiritual condition both of Christendom and heathendom, produced by the copious dews of divine grace—the abundant showers of spiritual blessings, that, in answer to such prayer, would assuredly descend from heaven to fertilize and refresh the earth! Who can tell how soon the command might go forth to a regenerated world—“Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!” Who can tell how soon the full splendour of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness would burst on our view, dispelling the dark clouds of ignorance, error, and sin; and the whole earth, redeemed from

the primeval curse, and restored to its primeval beauty, be replenished with a Saviour's grace, and "lightened with His glory!"

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUDING ADDRESS.

READER, who hast followed me thus far in the perusal of this work, I would affectionately address to you a few words at parting, on which I would earnestly implore the blessing of that Spirit without whose aid all our efforts to promote the glory of God, and the welfare of our brethren of mankind, must be utterly in vain.

Ignorant as I am of your peculiar character and circumstances, I will address you only under one aspect, which I know must apply to you, whatever be your condition in life, whether exalted or humble, young or old, rich or poor. I will address you as an inquirer after happiness. This is the universal inquiry. All are in search of happiness. The desire for it beats in every human breast; and there is nothing sinful in that desire. God has implanted it in the heart, for the very purpose of drawing that heart to Himself, "the Fountain of living waters," where alone this thirst for satisfying enjoyment can be quenched.

If, then, you have not yet been led to this Fountain, but are striving to satisfy the thirst for happiness from some of the broken cisterns of earthly pleasure, I would fain expostulate with you, in my sincere solicitude to be instrumental in guiding you to the only source of substantial and satisfying bliss.

In entering on this work, I undertook to prove, that the Gospel is promotive of true happiness, and that it reveals the *only path* in pursuing which true happiness *can* be found.

Reader, have I not redeemed my pledge? Imperfectly as I have executed my allotted task (and, believe me, I am unaffectedly and deeply sensible of that imperfection,) have I not established the position which I undertook to prove?

Just glance back with me at the ground we have travelled together.

Have I not shown that the love of God pours the purest, the most exalted happiness into the human heart?

Have I not shown that the service of God is indeed “perfect freedom, that its ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all its paths are peace?”

Have not I shown that the Gospel supplies the only hope that can satisfy the aspirations of the human soul; and the only antidote to the anxieties which so imbitter all earthly enjoyment, and especially to that most appalling of all apprehensions, the fear of death?

Have I not shown, that the Gospel eradicates all such tempers and dispositions as are inimical, and implants all such as are friendly, to human happiness; and by sanctifying, additionally sweetens every source of earthly enjoyment that reason approves?

Now, if I have proved all this, have I not, I would ask yourself, fairly redeemed my pledge? Have I not pointed out, as the privileged portion of every faithful follower of a crucified Saviour, a happiness exactly suited to all the wants and wishes of our nature, and alone capable of fully satisfying them all—a happiness equally within the reach of all; and that is pronounced alike by the testimony of that God who is truth, and the experience of all who

have tried it, to be the only happiness adequate to the unbounded desires and capacities of an immortal soul?

Let not, then, the goodness of the cause suffer in your estimation by the weakness of the advocate. Confess that even I have succeeded in convincing your judgment, and compelling you to give your verdict in favour of the position I undertook to maintain!

What flaw, indeed, can you detect in the evidence I have adduced; or what inconclusiveness in the arguments I have advanced? Will you contend that true happiness is not to be found in loving and being loved by the ever-blessed God—in the sweet feeling of being at peace with God, as accepted in His well-beloved Son—in being the object of the friendship of the Almighty, regarding Him as a covenant-triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter; and feeling assured, that He is continually lifting upon the soul the light of His countenance, and gladdening the spirit by the smile of His love? Or will you say, that it were unreasonable to look for happiness in the service of God; and that it must be a wearisome and profitless drudgery to toil for a Master so utterly unworthy of your regards *as Him who died for you*, and who is both disposed and able to do so little to recompense His servants for their labours of love? Or will you argue, that the antidote which the Gospel supplies for all earthly anxieties, and the fear of death, is really of no value; and that it is happier to cling to those distracting anxieties, and that tormenting fear, than to lay them down at the foot of the cross, and take up, in their place, a Christian's unclouded cheerfulness in the season of affliction, and triumphant joy in the prospect of the hour of death, and the ages of eternity? Or will you maintain, that the passions and tempers eradicated by the Gospel are more friendly to hap-

piness than those it implants; and that licentiousness, debauchery, pride, profaneness, covetousness, irascibility, resentment, and selfishness are productive of more real enjoyment to the human heart than purity, temperance, humility, piety, contentment, meekness, forgivingness, and the generous philanthropy of Christian love? In other words, will you argue, that the more unlike a man's character is to the Saviour's, and the more it resembles Satan's, the happier, in your judgment, he may hope to be? Or finally, will you maintain, that the purest sources of earthly enjoyment derive no increased sweetness from the smile of God, and the gratitude of a thankful heart; but are enjoyed with the greatest relish by those who forget the Giver in His gifts, and insult the Author of all their blessings by setting them up as idols in the heart from which He has been ungratefully dethroned?

Will you maintain any of these monstrous positions? No, reader, I am well assured you will not. You would feel it were an insult to your understanding to attempt the task. What, then, does this virtually prove? Why, that you are fully convinced in your judgment that the Gospel is, indeed, promotive of true happiness—that the real Christian is unquestionably the happiest of the children of men—that the favour of God is the only source of satisfying felicity—and that the hope of heaven sheds a brightness over the joys and even the sorrows of earth!

Yes, such is the deliberate conviction of your judgment. Well, then, since you are in search of happiness, may I not appeal to you, as a rational being, and ask you, why do you not seek for it where you are convinced it can alone be found?—Alas! here is the difficulty! Your *judgment* is convinced, but not your *heart*! *This* is still held in bondage to the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of

life ! This is still enslaved by earthly appetites, enthralled by earthly objects, or engrossed by earthly cares ! I have convinced your understanding, but I have not touched your heart—and I cannot ! This is work for Him who made it, and for Him alone ! It is He only who can touch its secret springs—who can emancipate its enslaved affections—who can free its fettered hopes and desires from the dominion of Satan and the entanglements of earth, and fasten them on Himself, and on those pure joys that emanate from the fountain of His love ! Yes, reader, the Holy Spirit alone can wean your heart from earth and earthly things ; and, twining its affections around a Saviour's cross, enable you to experience in that Saviour's love and service what all that have ever made the experiment have found—a “joy that is unspeakable and full of glory !” Will you not even now beseech of the Blessed Spirit, for the Saviour's sake, to work this wondrous change in your heart ?

Does not reason call on you, as a rational inquirer after happiness, to offer up that prayer ? For what can you desire in your longings after happiness, be your tastes or dispositions what they may, that the Gospel does not supply ? Are you one of a tenderer spirit, that centre your hopes of happiness on the affections of the heart ? Behold ! I show you in the blessed God an object, and the only object, that infinitely deserves your love, and can fully satisfy the infinite longings of the human heart ! And while you may lawfully love other objects *subordinately*, believe me, till you have learned to love God *supremely*, true happiness must be a stranger to your breast.

Are you of an active, enterprising disposition—one who looks to energetic exertion, in some honourable pursuit, as the path to happiness ? Behold ! I show you, in the service of God our Saviour, a pur-

suit and the only one, in which this desire can be fully satisfied; and you will be enabled to feel, that all your energies are enlisted in the most glorious cause and directed to the noblest end which can dignify the soul of man !

Are you covetous of riches? I show you wealth, in comparison of which all the gold of Ophir is nothing worth—riches that eternity cannot exhaust—the “unsearchable riches of Christ.” Is it honour you seek after? And what honour that worms of the dust can confer, is to be compared with that which cometh from God? Or are you an aspirer after glory? I show you a “crown of glory that fadeth not away—an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled—an everlasting kingdom that cannot be moved.” Is it exalted rank for which you pant? Behold! the saints of God—the faithful followers of the Lamb, shall “reign as kings and priests unto God for ever and ever!” Or is it pleasure for which you thirst? Lo, I tell you, not of unsatisfying and perishable pleasures, but of the “*fulness* of joy in the presence of God, and at His right hand, pleasures for evermore.”

“ Happiness, thou lovely name,
Where’s thy seat, oh, tell me, where?
Learning, Pleasure, Wealth, and Fame
All cry out—‘It is not here.’
Not the wisdom of the wise
Can inform me where it lies;
Nor the grandeur of the great
Can the bliss I seek create.

“ Object of my first desire,
Jesus, crucified for me!
All to happiness aspire,
Only to be found in Thee!
Thee to praise, and Thee to know,
Constitute our bliss below;
Thee to see, and Thee to love,
Constitute our bliss above.

“Lord, it is not life to live,
 If Thy presence Thou deny;
 Lord, if Thou Thy presence give,
 'Tis no longer death to die;
 Source and giver of repose,
 Singly from Thy smile it flows;
 Peace and happiness are Thine—
 Mine they are, if Thou art mine.”

Can you read these lines, which embody in such beautiful language the views I have been endeavouring to unfold, and not offer an earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit may enable you from this day to adopt them as the language of your heart—and, more decisive still, the language of your life!

If you offer up this prayer, and it be answered, (as assuredly it will, if offered up in sincerity and faith,) what a glorious change will immediately pass over your present feelings, and future prospects! Contemplate that change, as described with such sublimity and beauty, in the contrast drawn by an eloquent divine,* in a sermon on regeneration, between the character and condition of a Christian, and those of the votary of the world—the slave of sin.

“Regeneration is of the highest importance to man, as a subject of the divine government. With his former disposition he was a rebel against God, and with this he becomes cheerfully an obedient subject. Of an enemy he becomes a friend; of an apostate he becomes a child. From the debased, hateful, and miserable character of sin, he makes a final escape; and begins the glorious and eternal career of virtue. With his *character* his *destination* is equally changed; in his native condition he was a child of wrath, an object of abhorrence, and an heir of wo. Evil, in an unceasing and interminable progress was his lot; the regions of sorrow and despair his everlasting home; and fiends and fiend-like men his eternal companions. On this character good beings looked with detestation, and on his ruin with pity; while evil beings beheld both with that Satanic pleasure, which a reprobate mind can enjoy at the sight of companionship in turpitude and destruction. But when he becomes a subject of this great and happy change of character, all things connected with him are also changed. His unbelief, impenitence, hatred of God, rejection of Christ, and resistance of the Spirit of grace, he has voluntarily and ingenuously renounced; no more rebellious, impious, or ungrateful, he has assumed the amiable spirit of submission, repentance, con-

* The Rev. T. Dwight.

sidence, hope, gratitude, and love. The image of his Maker is enstamped upon his mind, and begins there to shine with moral and eternal beauty. The seeds of immortality have there sprung up, as in a kindred soil, and warmed by the life-giving beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and refreshed by the dewy influence of the Spirit of Grace, rise, bloom, and flourish with increasing vigour. In him, sin, and the world, and the flesh daily decay, and daily announce their approaching dissolution; while the soul continually assumes new life and virtue, and is animated with superior and undying energy. He is now a joint-heir with Christ, and the destined inhabitant of heaven; the gates of glory and of happiness are already opened to receive him, and the joy of saints and angels has been renewed over his repentance; all around him is peace—all before him purity and transport. God is his Father, Christ his Redeemer, and the Spirit of Truth his Sanctifier. Heaven is his eternal habitation, virtue is his immortal character, and cherubim and seraphim, and all the children of light, are his companions for ever! Henceforth he becomes, of course, a rich blessing to the universe: all good beings, nay, God Himself, will rejoice in him for ever, as a valuable accession to the great kingdom of righteousness, as a real addition to the mass of created good, and as an humble but faithful and honourable instrument of the everlasting praise of heaven. He is a vessel of infinite mercy; an illustrious trophy of the cross; a gem in the crown of glory, which adorns the Redeemer of mankind!"

Can you read this sublime passage, and still hesitate to acknowledge, "that to exhort you to be religious is only, in other words, to exhort you to take your pleasure—a pleasure, high, rational, and angelical—a pleasure, embased with no appendant sting, no consequent loathing, no remorses or bitter farewells—a pleasure made for the soul, and the soul for that; suitable to its spirituality, and equal to its capacities; such a one as grows fresher upon enjoyment, and though continually fed upon, is never devoured—a pleasure that a man may call as properly his own, as his soul or his conscience; neither liable to accident, nor exposed to injury? It is the foretaste of heaven, and the earnest of eternity. In a word, it is such a one, as being begun in grace, passes into glory, blessedness, and immortality; and those 'joys that neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man to conceive.'"

What will you say to these things? Can you

deny their truth? And, if you cannot, will you reject *such* happiness, and take—what in exchange? Oh! surely Esau's conduct, in preferring a mess of pottage to the inheritance of the first born, was wisdom compared to yours! For what is *your* choice? What must it be at the best? An idol of dust and ashes in preference to the blessed God! The service of Satan in preference to the Saviour's! Inexhaustible riches sacrificed for a few perishable grains of gold dust! The approbation of a fellow-worm preferred to the favour of Jehovah! A wreath that withers in a day, to a crown of unfading glory! A *moment* of unsatisfying pleasure, to an *eternity* of the fulness of joy!

Or is a career of sinful gratification the object of your fearful choice? Hear the word of warning, and pause before you proceed another step. "Ye victims of voluptuousness, ye martyrs of concupiscence, who formerly tasted the pleasures of sin for a season, but now are beginning to feel the horrors of it for ever; you serve us for demonstration and example. Look at those trembling hands, that shaking head, those disjointed knees, that faltering resolution, that feeble memory, that worn out body, all putrefaction; these are the dreadful rewards which vice bestows *now*, as pledges of what Satan will bestow presently, on those on whom he is preparing to exhaust his fury!"

Religion will prevent all this; and whatever else, in a career of sinful indulgence, is destructive of true happiness—"that passion which wastes the strength as with a fever; that ambition which wears out the frame faster than hard labour; that malice which robs of sleep; that gambling which forces a man backward and forward between the delirium of hope and the torture of fear; that gluttony which brings on apoplexy; that drunkenness which preys as a slow fire on the organs of life; that debauchery

which corrupts the whole mass of the blood, and brings the infirmities of age on the days of youth." Contrast what Satan and the Saviour thus offer to your acceptance ! and will you then still hesitate in your choice ? Will you still prefer the pleasures of sin for a season, with an *eternity of torment* as their reward, to the peace of God on earth, and the fulness of joy in His presence in heaven, for evermore ? Oh ! madness of the human heart ! What a sight for angels ! What a triumph to Satan ! How must those benevolent spirits mourn over your infatuation ! How must that malignant one rejoice, while he scorns you for the choice that you have made ! Would, would that I could persuade you to awake out of the fatal sleep, in which the enemy of your soul has plunged you, with the diabolical hope, that you will never awaken out of it, till death discovers your delusion—*too late*; and you will find yourself his victim, irrecoverably lost—for ever !

But, perhaps you will say, in reply to my representations, you know several religious professors, and they do not appear, if you may judge by their melancholy deportment, to have found religion that happy service I would represent.

We have already (Chap. xi.) endeavoured to answer this objection. But still, I would here advert again to the subject, to remove your misconceptions, and ask you—Can you not account for this phenomenon, without the Gospel being at all to blame for the melancholy you think you have remarked in its more serious professors ? Perhaps, from your totally erroneous estimate of the nature, the secret springs, and outward signs of true happiness, regarding thoughtless gaiety and noisy merriment as its essential characteristics, you have mistaken seriousness for melancholy, and gravity for gloom. You have forgotten that though noisy mirth may be no

unsuitable characteristic of the animal vivacity, the unreflecting glee of childhood, it is utterly unfit to characterize the rational and solid satisfaction of a matured mind in riper years; much less the deep tranquillity and holy elevation of Christian joy. So that it is not making a fanciful distinction in this matter to say, that, in happiness, the child courts companionship, and is noisy—the man retires into himself, and is silent—the Christian communes with his God, and is thankful. Do not, therefore, imagine that religious characters are gloomy, because they are grave; or think, that because they do not delight in wild gaiety, or noisy mirth, happiness is therefore a stranger to their hearts.

But other causes may be assigned for what you have observed in professedly religious characters. Perhaps they were only half-hearted professors, halting between two opinions; borderers, wavering between the contending claims of the world and the Saviour on their affections and lives! They knew just enough of the gospel to make them miserable, from the consciousness they were not yielding to the just requirements of Him whose love it unfolds, that supremacy in their hearts which they felt He deserved. And is the gospel to be blamed for this, when its only cure would be a full surrender of the heart and life to that gospel's claims?

Perhaps, though sincere, they were weak inquiring Christians whom you have observed. They had turned their steps toward Zion, but had not yet realized their precious privileges with sufficient clearness and strength of faith, to be able as yet to go on their heavenward way rejoicing. They were among those who sow in tears, and shall reap in joy—among the “blessed that mourn, who shall be comforted!” You need not shrink from embracing the gospel invitation, because of *such* sorrow. Believe me, it is immeasurably sweeter than the world's joy! One

tear of godly sorrow is worth ten thousand smiles of godless mirth!

Or, perhaps, the religious professors you have known were of a naturally grave—almost gloomy turn of mind; or of a nervous constitutional temperament, which disposed them to look on every object through a darkened medium—and the gospel does not profess to change the natural temperament, to cure bodily malady, or to work a miracle in a disordered state of the mental frame; or, it may be, they were brought to the Saviour through the deep waters of earthly sorrow, by the death of the dearest objects of their earthly love; and though the gospel has mingled its divine consolations in their cup of trial, it could not bring back the lost of love! What wonder, then, if the lonely survivor walk through a desolated world, with a sober, if not saddened step—with a peaceful indeed, yet a pensive smile—with at times a sorrowful, though not a repining, yea, even a thankful heart! What wonder if the bereaved one should sometimes, even amidst all the consolations that a Saviour has poured into the heart, look back on departed joys, and give them the tribute of a tear!

But let us turn from uninspired human testimony, which may be misled or mistaken, to that which cannot err, and cannot deceive.

Hear then the testimony of the Psalmist:—

“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart—for it becometh well the just to be thankful!” “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound—they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance! In thy name shall they rejoice all the day.”

Hear the testimony of the wisest of mankind:—

“Happy is the man that findest wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding—Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour! She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that

retaineth her! Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Hear the testimony of prophets:—

"The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel! Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God! For He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation—He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness. I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Hear now the apostolical testimony:—

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God—yea! rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory!—Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice! Sorrowing, yet always rejoicing—for the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Listen to the testimony of angels:—

"Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people—for unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord!"

Yea! listen to the voice of the Lord of angels—to Him, who is the fountain of all happiness, and cannot therefore be deceived in this point—to Him who is truth itself, and therefore cannot deceive!

His recorded judgment in the Beatitudes we have already heard.

Hear Him again:—

"These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full! Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you! These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace! Peace I leave with you—*My peace I give unto you.*"

Could even He give more?

Can you resist such a combination of infallible testimony? Will you not believe prophets, apostles, and angels? Above all, will you not believe the blessed God?

Let me not, however, be misunderstood—I do not wish to deceive you—I do not tell you, that if you choose the career I have pointed out, you will thence-forward tread a sunny path, undarkened by a cloud; and traverse a tranquil sea, unruffled by a storm! No—many a dark cloud will overshadow your path, and many a rough blast must you encounter, before you reach the sunshine and the shelter of your heavenly home. But the clouds will be “big with mercy, and will break in blessings o'er your head;” and the storms will only serve to speed your heavenward course, and still more endear the prospect of the haven of eternal rest. Nor do I tell you that, once you enlist in the Saviour's service, you will never after heave a sigh, or shed a tear—never feel the bitterness of unsatisfied desire or disappointed hope—never be saddened by sorrow or disquieted by fear! So far from this, I tell you honestly, that religion has sighs and tears, dissatisfactions and disappointments, sorrows and fears, that are entirely her own, and which the worldling can never know. But I tell you too (and, in so doing, I speak the “words of truth and soberness,”) that her sighs—the sighs of a broken and contrite spirit; and her tears—the tears of godly sorrow for sin—are far, far sweeter than the world's gayest smile or loudest laugh. I tell you, that her unsatisfied desires for continual communion with God, and disappointed hopes of attaining perfect conformity to His image—her holy fear of offending the Father that she loves, and her holy grief at having, in the smallest degree, incurred His displeasure, have more true happiness in them than the world's brightest hopes and most boasted joys! Yes! I assert it, without hesitation, that the Christian is happier in his sorrows—even those, which religion herself has inspired, than the worldling in his joys!

But, you say, perhaps, you are convinced—you

are firmly persuaded that the people of God alone are truly happy—but still, you are unwilling to enrol yourself in their ranks!

Why, if it be happiness of which you are in search? Are you just entering on the career of life? Do, I entreat you, make the trial of that path to happiness which the gospel points out, and which your own judgment cordially approves. Let neither the suggestions of Satan, the deceitfulness of your own heart, nor the ridicule of worldly acquaintances, deter you from entering on that only path which (you are yourself convinced) can conduct your steps either to peace on earth or to happiness in heaven! Let your heart, with all its affections, in their freshness—your life, in its sweet prime, be consecrated to Him who has given you all the blessings you enjoy! Surely, you cannot seriously resolve, that you will spend your best years, the strength and vigour of your faculties, the warm glow of your young affections, in the service of the world, and keep the refuse for God!—Keep the vile dregs of a wasted body, and a worn-out spirit, which the world rejects with scorn—keep *them* as an *offering good enough for Him who died for you on Calvary!* You cannot be guilty of such horrible impiety and ingratitude as this.

Besides, just reflect, what a mass you will escape of the acutest misery, resulting from the remembrance of sins, that may be forgiven by God, but cannot be forgotten by yourself—of souls you may have helped to ruin, and cannot now hope to save—and of wasted years, and lost opportunities of glorifying God, that may be repented of, but cannot be recalled; and what a store you will acquire of the sweetest happiness, springing from the retrospect (that you will look back upon with delight in heaven throughout eternity) of a long life, consecrated from its opening dawn to a Saviour's service, and brightened by the blessings flowing from His love,

which you have enjoyed yourself, and been instrumental in imparting to others, by this early dedication of yourself to Him who has the fullest right to your whole heart and life! "Hasten then," I would say to you, in the words of an eloquent writer of our day—"Hasten into His presence, fall down at His feet, and surrender yourself, and every thing you have, to His service! He will graciously accept the dedication; and ten thousand ages hence you will be still praising Him that you did so; and an unknown number will join in blessing Him on your account!"

But perhaps you have advanced further in the journey of life. You have tried many of the paths in which the children of the world walk. Let me ask you, have you found peace therein? Have you found satisfying happiness? Or, if you would answer me honestly, must you not add your testimony to Solomon's, and say, "All is vanity, and vexation of spirit!" Yes! you have been sowing the wind. What could you hope to reap but the whirlwind?

Well, then, why not now try the path which God Himself points out? If a traveller in a wilderness, parched with intolerable thirst, who had long sought in vain for a spring of cooling water, were to meet with one whose word he could not doubt, that offered to conduct him to a refreshing spring, what would you think of that traveller if he refused to listen to the voice of this messenger of good tidings? Such a voice calls to you, wandering as you are in this world's wilderness, scorched with a burning thirst for happiness, which you cannot find a spring of water in that wilderness to quench! Hear its gracious invitation! "Come unto *Me*, and I will give you rest! If any man thirst, let him come unto *Me*, and I will give him living water, of which whosoever drinketh shall never thirst!" Why, oh! why, will you not listen to that voice of love? Why so cruel to your own soul? Why rather perish of thirst

in the wilderness, than go to Him and take of the water of life, which He will give you, and drink pure bliss, ay, at the very fountain-head of happiness, for ever and ever!

Or, are you one, whose journey is rapidly drawing to its close? Are the shadows of evening darkening around you, and have the days come when you must say, I have no pleasure in them? Well, then, though your life has been hitherto one great blunder,—though you have as yet been only a proof of the power of Satan to deceive the children of men, and cheat them of true happiness, it is not yet, I would fain hope, too late to rectify your mistake. The voice of a Saviour's love calls even to you. Only obey that voice! Go even now to Jesus! And though a wasted life has left you but little to offer in testimony of your gratitude, at the foot of His cross, yet, in the strength of divine grace, resolve to offer even that little; and, so wonderful is the extent of a Saviour's love, and the efficacy of His atonement, that even that offering, through His prevailing mediation, will not be despised.

But I have hitherto addressed you, reader, only under one aspect, as an inquirer after happiness! There is, however, another, under which I would now briefly address you before I close, that of a professing Christian, since this involves a responsibility, that must exercise an infinitely, because everlastingly important influence on your happiness!

You profess to believe that "God *so* loved you, as to give His own Son as a propitiation for your sins"—that the Son of God *so* loved you, as to lay down His life for you on the cross—and that, unless your sins are blotted out in His blood, and your soul made meet by the Holy Spirit for the happiness of a holy heaven, you must perish everlasting, under the overwhelming burden of unpardonable guilt, tremendously aggravated by your ungrateful

contempt of the most stupendous manifestation of divine love that God Himself could display.

Now, let me affectionately ask you, *what* influence has your professed belief of this stupendous display of the love of God exercised over your heart and life? Has it awakened in your heart *one spark* of gratitude to God? Do you love Him who (you say you believe) *so* loved you as to die for you on Calvary? Are you living to his glory? You call Him your Master. Are you devoted to His service? You profess to take Him as your pattern. Are you walking in His footsteps? You call Him your Saviour. Are you trusting in Him? Your Lord. Are you ruled by Him? Your God. Do you adore Him?"*

If not, is there not something unspeakably awful in your conduct towards God? What! Can you stand at the foot of the cross, and see the everlasting Father there giving you the greatest proof of His love *even* in His power to bestow—His own and only Son—and yet feel no gratitude stirring in your heart to Him who has given you *such* a proof of His love? Can you stand there—hear the apostle crying out, “He spared not His own Son, but delivered *Him* up for us all!” and still listen with cold indifference to that powerful appeal? “Before that gift could have been bestowed, the ocean of the divine benevolence must have been stirred in all its unfathomable depths; should the shallow stream of our gratitude be only rippled on the surface? Of all His infinite resources, He freely gave the *sum*; of the mite-like penury of our nature, shall we return

* I would earnestly recommend the perusal of Stevenson's “Christ on the Cross,” a work, which I cannot conceive it possible that any *real* Christian could read, without a deepened feeling of love to the Saviour being awakened in his heart—or even any *professing* Christian, without being led to ask—“What have I rendered to the Lord in return for *such* love?”

Him only a part? To know that 'He, who was rich, should for our sakes become poor,' that the second Person in the mysterious Godhead should have personally descended to our rescue—descended from one depth of humiliation to another, till a cross arrested His further descent, and made it impossible for divine condescension itself to stoop lower—*this* is knowledge, which, as it has moved all heaven, should surely be sufficient to move and agitate all earth."

Reader—has this manifestation of divine love moved *your* soul towards Him, who has done so much to draw it to Himself? Has it agitated *your* heart with one passing emotion of gratitude to God? Or is it—the fearful fact, that *this* is the *only* love that awakens no responsive affection in *your* heart—that the Friend who died for you is the *only* friend for whom you feel no esteem or regard—and the Benefactor, who poured out His blood for you, to purchase for you all the blessings of grace and glory, is the *only* benefactor whose kindness kindles no thankfulness in *your* breast?

If this be so, can you be happy, with the consciousness of such revolting ingratitude staring you in the face? Can you be safe with the load of such accumulated guilt lying on your soul? You *may* see this despised Saviour face to face this night! What would be your feelings, were this to be the case? You *must* thus see Him ere long! With what anticipations can you look forward to the meeting? Must not the sense of your ingratitude to God fill you with self-reproach? Must not the prospect of everlasting banishment from His presence fill you with alarm? And can you, with such feelings, and such a prospect, enjoy one moment of happiness—at least of what, as a rational and immortal being, you can deem deserving of the name?

Are you then ready to cry out—"Almost thou

persuadest me to be a Christian?" Oh, remember—an almost Christian shall never inherit the promises of the Gospel! To be *almost saved* is to be *altogether lost!* Almost to reach the goal, but to lose the prize for ever! Almost to reach the rock, but to engulf in the abyss. Almost to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, but to be everlastinglly shut up in the prison-house of hell! Do be persuaded to be not merely an *almost* but an *altogether* Christian, living entirely in Christ, by Christ, and for Christ—and then you will be *altogether saved* in Him, with a perfect and everlasting salvation, which will bring present peace on earth, and eternal happiness in heaven.

But, perhaps, you are satisfied for the present—your health is unbroken—your spirits buoyant—and you are content with such gratifications (poor and perishable though they be) as the world can give, leaving it to those who prefer celestial food, to feed on the fruits of the tree of life.

Remember, however, that there are seasons coming when these poor and perishable gratifications must all fail, and if you have nothing else to lean upon for support or comfort, you will be, emphatically, a miserable object.

The season of sorrow will come! What will you do then? To whom will you turn for consolation? To your gay companions? They will desert you. To the remembrance of past pleasures? It will torture you. To the world you have idolized? It has no balm for a wounded heart. To the God whose love you have slighted—whose very existence you have practically denied? Will you not fear to look to Him in affliction, whom in prosperity you have insulted and despised? Would not one hour of a Christian's consolation—one smile of a Saviour's love—be then felt to be worth all the gratifications this world ever gave?

The hour of death will come! What will you do then? When the world is giving way under your feet—eternity opening on your view—your body tortured with pain, or sinking in decay—your soul hovering on the brink of a dark and fearful abyss, unillumined by one ray of light from heaven, down which it dare not look, yet must plunge into its blackness of darkness for ever—when all that meets your view is—an angry God—a dissolving frame—a departing world—a yawning hell. What! oh! what will you do *then*? Could you witness, as the minister is often obliged to do, the death-beds of those who have lived without God in the world, and who, dying without an interest in Christ, die without hope—could you see the expression of unutterable horror that gathers over their dying features—could you hear their appalling death-shriek of despair—you would not, believe me, you would not, lest that tremendous threatening—“Because I have called, and you refused, I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh!”—should be fulfilled in you—you would not leave preparation for death to a dying hour! Hear, now, in contrast, what are a Christian’s feelings in the prospect of death! “In general,” says the biographer of the heavenly-minded Archbishop Leighton, “his temper was serene rather than gay; but his nephew states, that if ever it rose to an unusual pitch of vivacity, it was when some illness attacked him:—when, ‘from the shaking of the prison doors he was led to hope, that some of those brisk blasts would throw them open, and give him the release he coveted.’ Then he seemed to stand tiptoe on the margin of eternity, in a delightful amazement of spirit, eagerly waiting the summons to depart, and feeding his soul with the prospect of immortal life and glory. Sometimes, while contemplating his

future resting-place, he would break out into that noble apostrophe of pious George Herbert:—

‘O let me roost and nestle *there*!
Then of a sinner Thou art rid,
And I of hope and fear.’”

Reader! would not all this world ever gave its votaries be well exchanged for *such* feelings in the hour of death? But death is not the most awful scene that awaits you! Its terrors, however appalling, must terminate as soon as it has banished the immortal spirit from its tenement of clay and ushered it into eternity—but, then—

The day of judgment will come! And what will you do then? Yes! “He that cometh will come! —for behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him.” How soon, who can tell? For we know not now the day, nor the hour, when He may come! But we do know, that ere long “the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised.” The Lord Jesus Christ—the crucified One of Calvary—will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, with ten thousand times ten thousand angels! From before His face the heavens and the earth shall flee away! “Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory—the judgment shall be set, and the books opened”—and *you* shall stand before His judgment seat! You, if you persevere and perish in your present state, you in *that* day, shall find that “it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you!” For your inexcusable guilt, in despising a Saviour’s love, will be then seen and felt to be infinitely more aggravated than theirs! Then shall you be placed at the left hand of Him that sitteth on the throne; and He shall say to you—“*Depart* from Me, thou cursed one, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!” Reader, is this

world worth exposing thy soul, for its sake, to *such* a sentence as *this*?

But even this is not the worst, for even this day of terror will pass away. Even this is only the beginning of sorrows, but they are sorrows that will never end; for

The ages of eternity will come! And what a thought! To you they will be ages of eternal wo! Oh! to be everlastinglly tormented in that flame that never can be quenched! To feel the everlasting gnawings of that worm that can never die! To be plunging deeper and deeper, throughout eternity, into the dark bottomless abyss of inconceivable despair! To endure, without a moment's mitigation, throughout endless ages, anguish most bitter, "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth"—a full appreciation of what has been rejected, and an agonizing consciousness of what is incurred—the total absence of hope—"the blackness of darkness," to be known and felt, "for ever and ever."

It is too horrible to *think* of! What will it be to *endure*? The very *idea* is too dreadful. What will be the *reality*? The mere *vision* of hell is intolerable. What a *home* will hell *itself* be to dwell in for *eternity*! Are you resolved to make the fearful experiment? God in His infinite mercy forbid! It is *this* which stamps such madness on your choice, reader, in preferring Satan to God as a master, and hell to heaven as a home! It is this appalling consideration, that you cannot give up the prospect of being eternally happy with God in heaven, without incurring the penalty of being eternally miserable with Satan in hell! There is no intermediate state—God or Satan *must* be your Master—heaven or hell *must* be your home—for ever, and ever, and ever! *Which* will you choose? Are you in the possession of reason, and can you still hesitate in your choice? Will you not, will you

not this day spread throughout heaven the joy that is in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth?

But I forbear! Stronger arguments I cannot advance. More awakening considerations I cannot urge. I can only pray, that the Spirit of God may bring these with power to your soul—that *He* may speak “who calls to things that are not, and they come”—that He may cry out to your dead soul, slumbering in the grave of its corruptions, “Come forth!”—that so it may start up at the sound of His Almighty voice, and live in the newness of spiritual life, to the glory of God!

Let me, then, conjure you, at parting, as you would not behold, with unutterable terror, the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory—as you would not hear *that* dreadful sentence from His lips—as you would not spend eternity in weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; or, rather, as it is your everlasting happiness I so ardently desire to promote, I conjure you, by all the pure and satisfying pleasures that the love and service of God can confer on earth and in heaven—by all the consolations and hopes that comfort and support the Christian in the season of sorrow and the hour of death—by all the blessedness that will be their portion in the day of judgment and throughout the ages of eternity—by the crown of glory that will encircle the brows of the redeemed, and the songs of praise they will lift up before the Redeemer’s throne—in a word, by all that is included of unutterable, inconceivable bliss in that one brief sentence—“In Thy presence is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand, pleasures for evermore!”—by all this, I conjure you no longer to forsake your own mercies—no longer to be the murderer of your own immortal soul—no longer to sacrifice for the trifles of time the joys and glories of eternity; but now—even now—to listen with a

grateful heart to the voice of Him who left heaven for your sake—and whose smile itself is heaven to the soul. Listen to *His* voice, calling to *you*—“Come unto Me, and I will give you rest—rest in My love on earth from all that disquiets the heart of man—rest in My righteousness from the wrath of God—rest in My service from the slavery of sin—and in My presence in heaven, perfect, untroubled, everlasting rest!”

May the eternal Spirit, reader, enable you to comply with this gracious invitation; and *then indeed* you shall find rest unto your soul! Happiness will thenceforward take up its abode in your breast—not that wretched counterfeit which cheats the children of the world, clouded through the entire of its brief career with continual anxiety and disappointment; and closing, amidst the shadows of death, in the darkness of everlasting despair!—*but* that satisfying reality which is the exclusive portion of the children of God—which, like its divine Author and object, comes from God, and, when its earthly career is closed, like Him, returns to God—partaking of His own nature and immortality, and, with still progressive brightness, “shining more and more unto the perfect day” of heaven’s unclouded and eternal bliss! Once this happiness is secured, what will you have to fear? What can rob you of a possession that is in the keeping of God Himself, or intercept the joy that comes direct from Him?

Is it sorrow? Sorrow will only deepen it, by drawing you nearer to its Fountain-head!

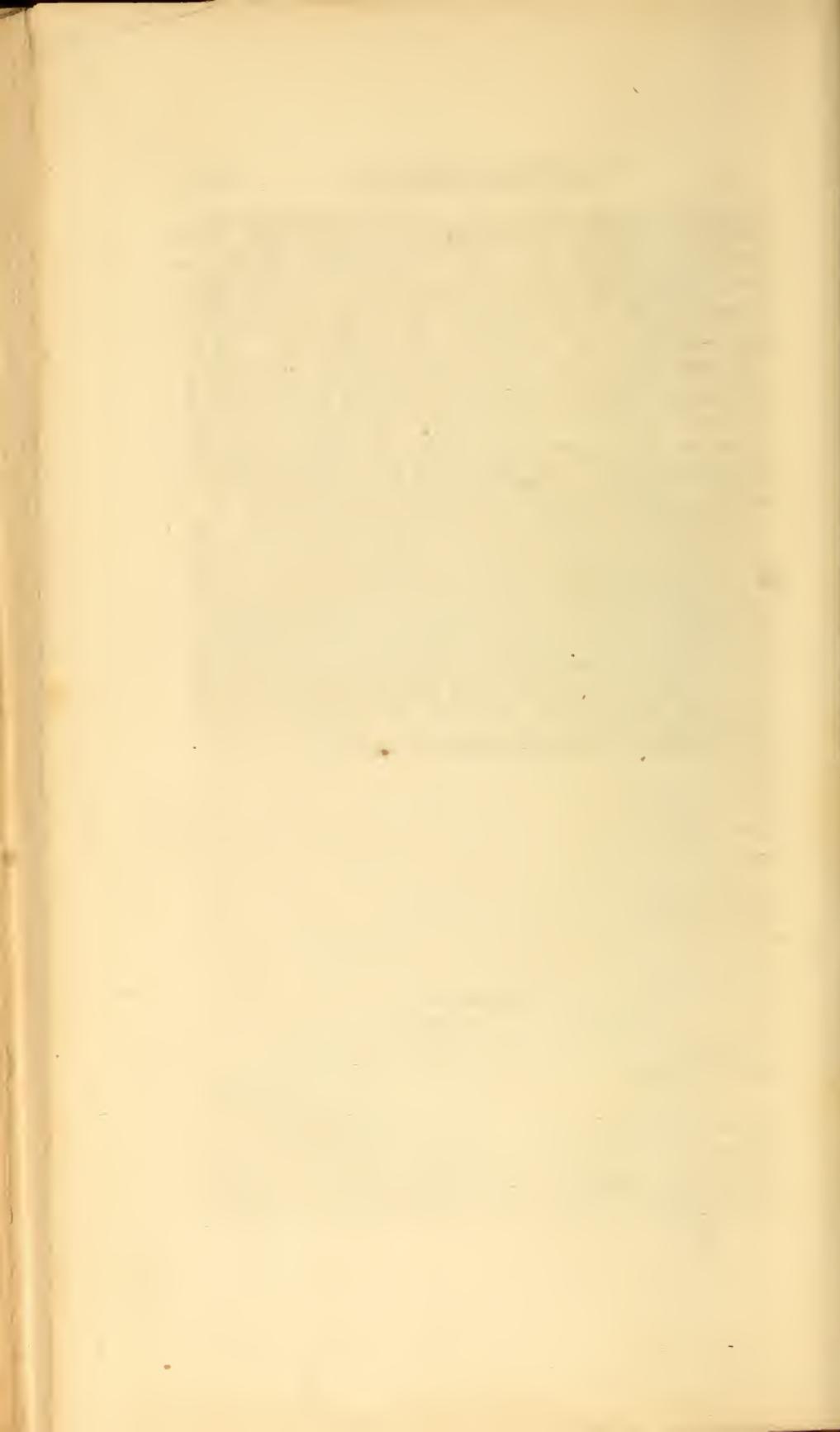
Is it death? Death will only invest it with the hues of heaven, and stamp on it the impress of immortality!

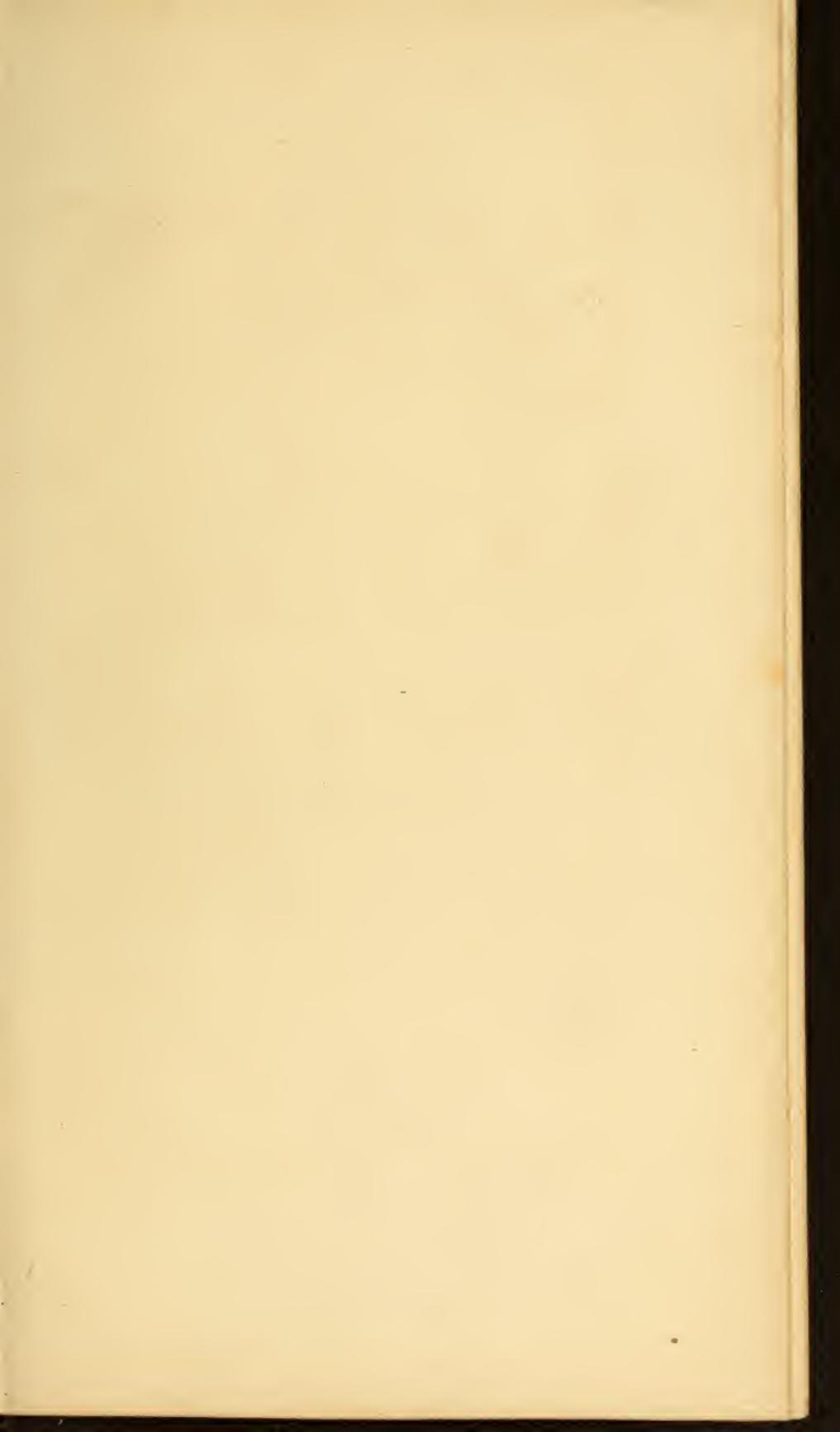
Is it the judgment-day? *That* will be the day of your triumph—your coronation-day—when He that sitteth upon the Throne, regarding you with a smile of ineffable love, shall place you, with all the

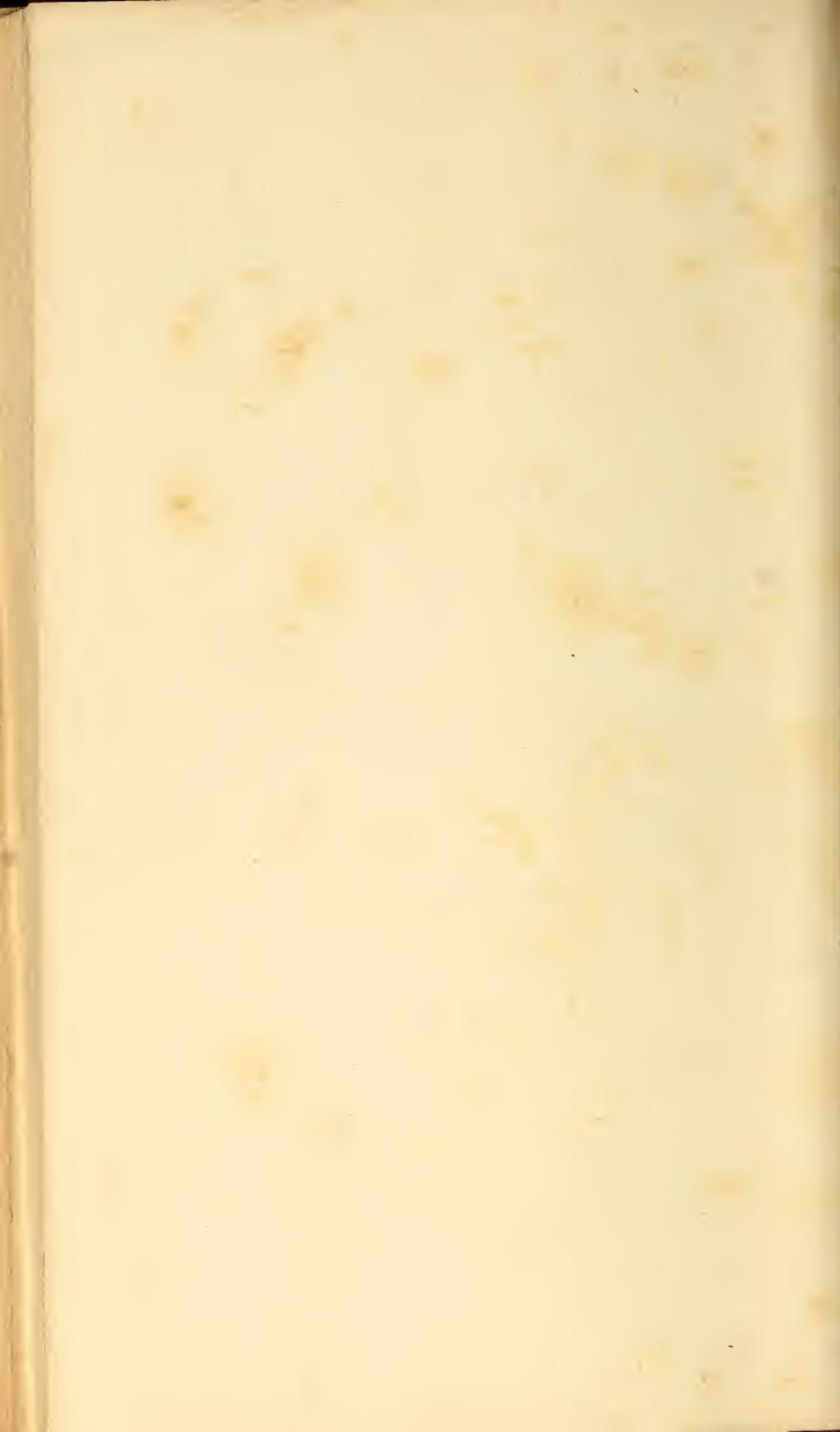
members of His blood-bought church, at His right hand, and put on you a crown of glory, and say to you before the assembled universe—"Come, thou blessed of my Father! inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world!" Is it the ages of eternity? As its endless ages are rolling on, your happiness, flowing from His presence and centred in His love, continually receiving fresh accessions from fresh discoveries of His grace and manifestations of His glory, will be enlarging brightening, deepening, with an everlasting increase.

Christian reader! behold *thine* inheritance! Do I demand too much, when I demand from thee the entire devotedness of thy whole heart and life, as the proof of thy gratitude to the God of thy salvation—the Father, who has prepared for thee *this* inheritance from everlasting—the Son, who has purchased it for thee with *His own* precious blood—and the Spirit, who has taken up His abode in thine heart, to make thee meet for its everlasting enjoyment?

THE END.















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